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# How to PLAY THE INFIELD

# How to PLAY THE OUTFIELD



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With a runner on third base the batter, who is a left-handed hitter, has made an effort to cut the ball to right field in such a way as to score the runner, even though the latter himself is thrown out at first base. It is not an easy play to make. If the ball is batted too hard the runner, probably, and not the batter will be retired. The batter here has been successful as it is evident that it was all the fielding team could do to retire him.



A base-runner has been caught between second and third bases. The ball has been thrown by the infielder, who is immediately behind the runner, to the third baseman. The latter has his hands ready to receive it. The runner is attempting to stop and turn back. The infielder, who has thrown the ball, should drop out of the play and back up the third baseman if the runner gets too close to the thrower. It is presumed that a fielder has come in to back him up.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.

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*By John B. Foster*  
*Editor Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide*

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## Publishers' Note

Base ball playing by the infielders has changed so much within the last quarter of a century that it is better now for all beginners to be informed as to how all the infield positions should be played, and then devote themselves specially to the position which they personally decide upon. Two of the positions of the infield, namely, second base and shortstop, have so many plays alike that the only right way is to know everything possible about both places. Part of the time the shortstop acts as second baseman, and when he is acting as second baseman the latter is usually playing in a position that might be called the right field shortstop.

First base is unlike any of the infield positions because so many of the players on the side at bat are put out at first base. Third base is unlike the other infield positions because so few runners get there as compared with the other bases, and also for the reason that most of the fielding plays at third base are difficult.

The beginner who plays second base can play it better, however, if he knows what the fellow has to do who plays first base, shortstop and third base, and that is why all this valuable information has been placed in one volume. In fact, it is the only up-to-date manner in which the subject can be treated intelligently. Every reader is, therefore, urged to study carefully the instructions given for other positions, whether infield or outfield, as it is the best way by which he can improve the general quality of his play in his own special position.

That is not all. Playing the outfield is so closely related to playing the infield that a complete description has been given concerning the duties of the left fielder, the center fielder and the right fielder. Within one cover every beginner in base ball is enabled to read about all the everyday needs to play a fine, well-balanced, well-thought-out game of base ball.

The contents, which tell how the game should be played, are the result of years of experience in close contact with big league clubs. The author, Mr. John B. Foster, editor of the Spalding Guide, was taught how to play base ball by a big leaguer and has been a part of big league base ball as a critic and as an official for more than a quarter of a century. He has traveled thousands of miles with professional players and has witnessed thousands of big league games. For fifteen years Mr. Foster was present at the principal training camps of the major league teams, which are the best base ball schools in the world, and has followed the national game yearly from the Southern training trips to the final out in the world series. We feel sure that every boy who aspires to be a big league baseman or outfielder will find much valued instruction in this volume that will be helpful to him in his efforts to reach his goal.

AMERICAN SPORTS PUBLISHING COMPANY.

# THE INFIELD



A close play at first base and one of the kind which the umpire dislikes. The first baseman is reaching full length to catch a low throw. The runner is going into first base at top speed and the umpire must judge whether the ball was in the hands of the outstretched baseman before the runner touched the base.



The runner who had been at first base tried to steal second. He is shown on the ground with his foot outstretched toward second base. He is too late. The second baseman has received the ball from the catcher, touched out the runner, and tossed the ball back into the infield. The second baseman played for him right, making him slide in front of him.

Photo N. Y. Daily News.

## THE INFIELD

All infield positions in the game of base ball are so important to the team that a player may shine in one of them as well as in another. Whether to be a first baseman, a second baseman, a shortstop or a third baseman depends upon the natural choice of the boy and the beginner. He may have a liking for one of the positions and prefer to start there. Often he finds out after a little experience that he can play one of the other infield positions better. Consequently, he moves to that, and the experience which he had in the first position invariably helps him in his new place.

•  
**Second base and shortstop are most alike.**

No two positions on the infield are played exactly alike, yet all four have plays which are similar to each other. As the game is played now, the two infield positions which are most alike are those of second base and shortstop. So many things come up in a game, which are taken care of either by the second baseman or the shortstop in almost the same way, that we can think of the second baseman as a right field shortstop, and of the shortstop as a left field shortstop, although we know that for the sake of convenience, and because it avoids confusion, it is better to stick to the old names of "shortstop" and "second baseman."

To be a good infielder at any of the bases or in the position of shortstop the following things are necessary:

An infielder must be a quick thinker. Plays have to be made at once.

He must be quick to start and quick to recover his balance. He must be able to shift from one side to the other almost immediately to recover badly bounding balls and poor throws.

He must have accurate eyesight to follow the ball closely when something may cause it to turn from a straight course.

He must have what is known in base ball as a "good pair of hands." That is the way in which they refer to those hands of which the fingers are long and loose jointed, with broad palms which are not too thick across the inside of the knuckles.

### **Infielder must throw straight and swift.**

He must be able to throw straight and with swiftness. Long distance throwing is not so necessary as it is for the outfielder, although it is a good thing to be able to throw far, but accuracy is all important.

He should be able to throw underhand as well as overhand. It is a great help. In certain plays the underhand thrower has a great advantage over the overhand or round-arm thrower. Any throw is a round-arm throw in which the player uses the full length of his arm to make the motion to throw before letting go of the ball.

Long reach is desirable. Occasionally a long body will make up for lack of length in the arms.

He should be able to pivot on either foot. To "pivot" means to be able to turn on the ball and toes of one foot, and to turn as quickly to the right as to the left, or as quickly to the left as to the right. It does not sound difficult, but the player who has been accustomed to pivot

on his right foot only will find that it is. So will the player who has used only his left foot as the pivot foot.

He must be able to run speedily. That is very important. Height is an added advantage.

A player may be a good infielder if he does not possess every one of these qualifications. If there were one who had them all he would be an ideal infielder.

### Never give up in base ball.

In addition to the foregoing physical qualifications, the player should be persevering, patient, have plenty of grit and a spirit of never-say-die, no matter how the game may be going. Remember, in base ball the game is never over until the winning half of the final inning has been played.

An infielder is asked to play a different kind of game from the outfielder, the catcher, or the pitcher. The outfielder has ground balls to handle, but he has more time to judge where they may strike the ground and then bound to him. The swiftest line drive which goes to the outfielder consumes more seconds in its flight than the line drives which are caught by the infielder. Particularly is this true of the line drives which are batted to the third baseman when he is playing within the base lines, or to the shortstop when he is playing inside the diamond.

The first baseman catches some sharp hits batted on the line, but they are fewer in the long run than those which are batted to the third baseman and the shortstop, and probably fewer than those which are batted to the second baseman. There are no positive figures to determine this, but in the many years in which the writer has

witnessed the games of all the big league base ball teams he is certain that he has seen more line drives batted to the left side of the diamond than to the right side. In part that may be due to the greater number of right-handed batters in the earlier days of base ball.

### **Infielders must watch base-runners.**

In addition to his duties as a fielder, the infielder also has the opposing base-runners with whom to deal. He comes directly into contact with them. From the moment that a runner arrives safely at first base there is always the possibility that he may be put out at some succeeding base and the infielder positively must know the proper play to make when that situation is thrust upon him. If he falters for an instant the opportunity may be lost and what seems to be the most insignificant misplay in base ball sometimes is the turning point of the game. A hesitating throw, because the infielder was unsettled as to whom he should have thrown the ball, may start the opposing team's winning run.

That brings up another point—the careful reading of the base ball rules. The better the boy knows the rules of the game the better he is prepared for anything which may come up. Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide not only contains the rules, but it contains explanations of all of them and is filled with notes which will be of the greatest help to the boys and beginners. It is the only publication which contains notes that go into the heart of all plays on the field, making it plain to the players why a certain rule is a part of the game and how to play correctly in accordance with what the rule says.

## THE FIRST BASEMAN

Of the four infield positions, there is none which has changed more in the way that it is played than first base. Every beginner in base ball who feels that he would like to play first base can be sure that he is as valuable to his nine as the beginner who aspires to be a second baseman.

Once the first base position was looked upon as of not much account as a part of the play. It was thought to be the position of least consequence on the infield. Charles A. Comiskey, owner of the Chicago American League club, was the player who changed that. When he was first baseman for the famous St. Louis Browns who won the championship of the American Association in 1885 and in succeeding years he began a new method of playing first base. It resulted in first basemen of an entirely different type from that time on. Before Comiskey really showed how first base should be played if a fellow on a nine was a good batter, perhaps not much of a fielder, and could catch a thrown ball well, he was chosen to be the first baseman. In amateur games among men, and in the games that the boys used to play, it was quite common to pick out the slowest, or almost slowest, fellow in the club and put him on first base. No greater importance was attached to his value than that he should be sure to catch the ball when the other infielders threw it to him. If he failed to catch thrown balls and could bat a little he might be moved out to the right field, which was considered among the boys to be the least important position of all.

If he stopped some hard ground hits as a first baseman now and then, all the better, but if a number of those hits went by him no one thought much about it, because the first baseman was what might be called a semi-catcher. Indeed, when the catcher played back, before the rule was changed in 1901, and the ball was still out on the first bound the catcher was a harder worked player than the first baseman. After looking at one of the lively first basemen who play nowadays for a major league team, this may seem to be an exaggeration. It is not, but is a description of the manner in which they played oldtime base ball before Comiskey proved that there was a big opportunity in the infield which had not been thought out and correctly demonstrated.

#### **What Comiskey did to change old ideas.**

Comiskey's most important move was in playing away from first base instead of on top of the bag. The best way in which to obtain a notion of the difference that it made is to go out some afternoon and play first base without moving to exceed six feet away from it, and almost directly along the line between first base and second base. Imagine, for instance, that you were playing first base for your home team and that most of the afternoon you located yourself either squarely on the base, or at a point on the base line, when there was no runner on first base. Furthermore, you stood not much more than your own length away from the bag, your feet anchored, while some of those fast bounding grounders skipped and hopped past you to the outfield. If you can picture that you will have a fairly good idea of how first base was played before Comiskey thought of his way to play it.

Instead of standing close to the base, almost on top of it, as had been the custom in base ball prior to his time, he took his place back of first base, some distance to the left of it, and far away from the base line, unless there was some situation in the game that made him play in. He covered the ground in what might be called a short right field. It is probable that he played as deep, or deeper, than the first baseman of the present time. There is a humorous side to this fact, as Comiskey actually played first base in that manner for about half of a season before it began to attract attention. The reason for that was the general tendency of base ball fans of those days never to get excited over a first baseman unless he was a hard hitter. From a fielding standpoint, most of the cheers came when the first baseman caught a wild throw, which was uncommonly wild, or jumped in the air and pulled down a hot line drive. It was the result of the prevailing belief that a first baseman was a catching player, like an outfielder catching flies, for instance, but not a fielding player, like a shortstop picking up grounders.

When the base ball folks did awaken to what Comiskey was doing for the St. Louis Browns the day of the old-fashioned first baseman was ended. No more was it possible for some slow-running batter, who could do little else than bat, to hold his own as a first baseman. Comiskey was stopping what had seemed to be base hits to right field, and the newer first basemen were forced to do likewise. Of the school of first basemen who began to play in the late '70s, the player to remain longest was Anson of the Chicago team, but he had an invaluable

ally on second—Fred Pfeffer—who covered ground for both second base and first. Many a play was saved by the agility with which Pfeffer could get over toward first base and stop ground hits. He played as close or closer to first base as a second baseman than any other player of record on a championship team.

### Tenney brought left-handers to the front.

We are relating this to emphasize the importance to beginners of not underrating what a first baseman can do, and not underestimating the importance of the position to the remainder of the nine.

The next great step in the development of playing first base was made by Fred Tenney of the Boston National League club when he proved that all other things being equal, a skillful left-handed first baseman is superior to a skillful right-handed first baseman, and he proved it more satisfactorily than any man of his time or any who had preceded him. There had been left-handed first basemen before him. Not many, perhaps, and assuredly not one who gave such an exhibition of left-handed expertness as he did.

A right-handed first baseman can stop a ground hit every bit as well as a left-handed first baseman, but no right-handed first baseman can be in the same natural position to throw to second base for a double play, or to retire a runner, if the batter has bunted, as a left-handed first baseman. When the latter straightens himself up with the ball in his hand the line of the throw is directly in front of him. This must be plain to anyone. There may be three different ways in which a right-handed first

baseman may be standing after he has recovered a ground ball. In each of the three ways he is bound to make a quarter to a three-quarter turn, before he can trust himself to throw to second base, and even then the runner may be in the line of the throw and unintentionally interfere with him. So you see he is handicapped doubly. There are any number of good right-handed first basemen. It is out of the question to expect that all the first basemen in base ball must be or can be left-handed, but it has been proved that the left-handed first baseman has a natural advantage over his right-handed brother.

### **One right-hand advantage.**

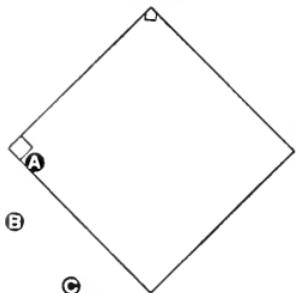
On the other hand there arises a play on which the right-handed thrower has the better of it. That is to home plate to catch a runner who is trying to score from third base. The unfortunate part to the right-hander of that play is that it may not happen once in ten games, while the plays from the first baseman to the second baseman may happen ten times in three games. It is an awkward throw as a rule for the left-handed first baseman from any point on the infield between his position and that of the pitcher to the catcher at home plate, and it is not infrequent to see the left-handed first baseman throw the ball to the ground or over the catcher's head when he tries to get a runner scoring from third.



First baseman playing for a high throw with both hands. Sometimes the first baseman will try for the ball with one hand. It is so important that he get the ball at first base that he must always try for it. (Kelly, Giants.)

## First Baseman on the Field

The game is about to begin and the first baseman goes to his fielding stand. What position shall he take?



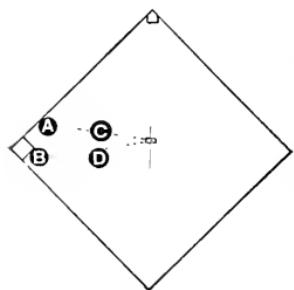
A—Position of first baseman with runner on first.  
B—Position of first baseman playing for batter, no runner on first. C—Shows about where the second baseman plays.

Immediately begin the duties of the new style first baseman. In the old days there were no regular bunters and the first baseman did not have to watch for them. If the first batter is known to be a good bunter and a good ground hitter also, it will not be so much the duty of the first baseman to play for him on the infield as that of the third baseman. The pitcher and the catcher. The first baseman should go to a point behind the base line which runs from first base to second base, and station himself at least twelve or fifteen feet to the left of first base. By "left" is meant toward second base. If the first baseman is not equally expert with each hand in playing a ground ball it is best to protect his weak side. That is, if he is not so good with his left hand, to edge toward the foul line; if he is slow with his right hand, to get over a little further toward second base. In this position he becomes a quarter right fielder. If he is very fast he will dare to play back further than a slow first baseman. This position is right when there is no one on first base, or when second base is filled, or when there is a runner on first base and the batter is to be played for without bothering much

about the runner on first. The latter happens at times with two men out.

If the first batter has succeeded in reaching first base safely and has become a base-runner the first baseman must move up to the bag while the pitcher has the ball in hand, or while the ball is in play on the infield, in order that he may be a direct aid to the pitcher to assist in trying to prevent the base-runner from obtaining a good lead for the purpose of stealing second base. During this period the baseman plays very close to the bag.

#### First baseman to handle bunt hits.



A — First baseman inside diamond for bunt. B — Pitcher (dotted line, D) covering first base or, reverse, pitcher (dotted line, C) going for bunt, first baseman remaining at B.

It will also be his duty, if the batter following is expected to bunt for a sacrifice, to field the bunt unless the pitcher has signified to him that he will take care of the ball. There always should be a perfect understanding on this play, for some very foolish situations are the

result without such an understanding. The pitcher, for instance, may field the ball perfectly and pick it up to throw to first base, only to find the first baseman standing close to him. The first baseman may get in the way of the pitcher, or the situation may be reversed, unless there is agreement between the players as to what they are to do. The second baseman is supposed to fill in when the first baseman leaves the bag, but sometimes the second baseman is forgetful, and at other times there may be a following play for

which he must be near second. In any event pitcher and first baseman must know how they are to act when the sacrifice is to be killed. In the play to kill the sacrifice the left-handed first baseman shows to advantage over the right-handed first baseman.

When there is a runner on third base and one on second, or when the situation is very tense, with a runner on third base and the batter is almost known to be ready to try for a squeeze play, the first baseman advances well within the diamond between the first base line and the pitcher, where he stands ready to field the ball on a bunt. He also takes the same position when there are runners on second base and first base, and the batter is expected to sacrifice. In this situation there is nothing to be gained by playing immediately close to first base. Nor does it matter so much what becomes of the batter. The principal thing to do is to get the runner out if possible who is nearest home. It is an old story, but a true one in base ball, that runs win games, and if you can put a player out who is at third base you have destroyed three-quarters of a run right there.

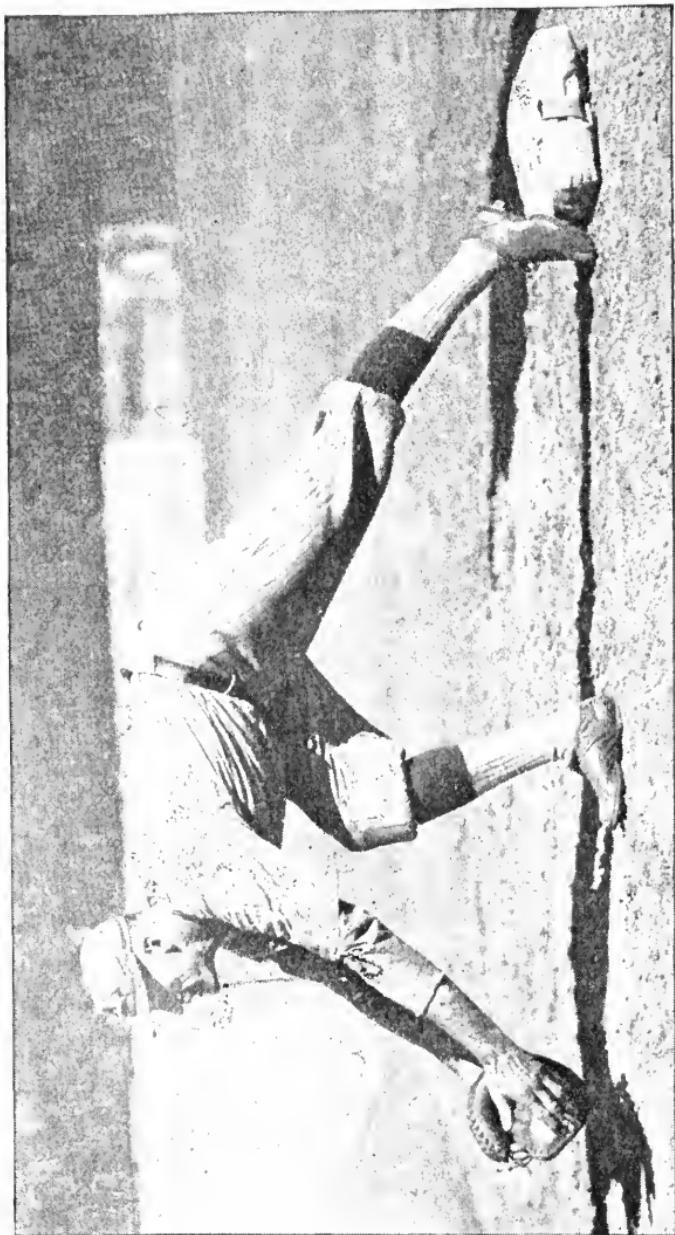
### Three principal shifts at first base.

The three principal positions or shifts of the first baseman are as just outlined, viz.:

First—With first base unoccupied, back of the base line.

Second—With first base occupied, on the bag as an auxiliary to the pitcher.

Third—With a sacrifice looming under certain conditions, within the infield.

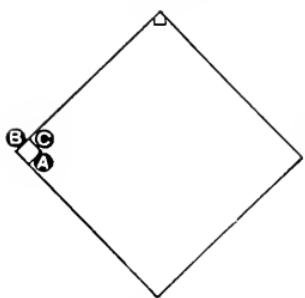


"Smothering" the ball, which means holding the glove tight to the ground and not giving the ball a chance to take the first bound. Excellent play to make on low throws and on grounders where the only chance is to make such a play or lose the ball completely. (Daubert, Cincinnati.)

## The First Baseman's Feet

When reference is made to the use of the feet by a ball player perhaps the first thought will be, "How absurd. No one plays base ball with his feet, except to run." But it is not absurd. It is one of the most necessary qualifications of being a good first baseman; and it is a point that has been, and is, overlooked almost constantly.

Every beginner at first base should learn not to cross his feet while playing. There is a right way and a wrong way to touch the bag. The left foot and not the right foot is the one to be used to touch the base in order to make put outs. Offhand you may be confident in your own mind that you always use the proper foot, yet when you come to note carefully whether you are doing so, you may discover that you have been running up to the base to touch it with the right foot. In this case that happens to be the incorrect foot, and you have not been aware of your own mistake.



Play inside, as at A. Do not play outside, as at B. Do not play in front of base, as at C.

Presuming that you are about to receive a throw, always bear in mind that you should so station yourself as to be able to keep your body inside of the base by standing, if possible, on the fair side of the foul line. A wild throw will drive you out of your position if the ball passes over your head. In that case you have no alternative but to

make the play in the best way that you can, because it is first duty to try to block the ball, even though you are unable to catch it.

The proportion of wild throws to good throws at the most is not greater than five in one hundred to first base, which is a fine credit to the accuracy of American throwers. Probably it is not as large as that, which merely increases the importance on your part of playing the base with the proper foot. There will be many low throws. It is evident that if there are low throws, and a number of them, the first baseman cannot play well for a ball thus thrown and at the same time be trying to touch the base with his right foot. The longest and best reach is gained by stretching forward as far as possible with the left foot in contact with the base. It is a natural position to recover the ball and it is a position which will not bring the base-runner when he crosses the bag into contact with the first baseman. It is not uncommon to notice among those who are beginning to play first base a disposition to fumble around with the right foot for the base when they are hard pressed to make a play. That is called "crossing the feet." It is the outcome of a wrong beginning in which the first baseman, in playing off the bag for a grounder, or for a low throw after he had got the ball, tried to kick back to touch first base with his right foot.

Many young first basemen have come into major league teams bringing that bad habit with them. The first fault that was found with them was the way they used their feet and they were told to change their style and never to think of touching first base with the right foot unless

they happened to be crossing the base in making a play in which they were trying to beat the runner to the bag after they had stopped the ball. It is not always possible to time one's step accurately enough in plays of that character to place one foot on the base as against the other. The principal idea is to get to the base as quickly as possible in advance of the runner.

### **Only one foot is right.**

It will be evident to the beginner who tries both methods of using the feet that only one is right. Using the left foot as the "jabbing foot" always gives greater freedom and wider area in which to play. Place the left foot on the base and reach out to assure yourself of the foregoing fact. Then try with the right foot and notice what an unsatisfactory position you have assumed as compared to that which you had when you touched the base with the left foot.



Smothering the ball at first base with the foot resting against the bag. Not only is the fielder helped in this play by the manner in which the ball is fielded, but he is also helped by the baseman's reach. (Kelly of the Giants.)

## First Baseman Must be a Sure Catch

The player at first base must be able to catch a thrown ball with fair certainty in any kind of a position in which he may find himself. That is one qualification that he must have if he lacks some others. He may not be as good a fielder of ground balls as some players, he may be a slower runner and he may not be quite as good a batter, but he must be able to catch a thrown ball well.

To help him catch a thrown ball he has the advantage of a first baseman's glove, or mitt, which gives him assistance that the old ball players lacked some years ago. First of all, there was the bare hand in which to catch a thrown ball, and, oh, how they used to sting once in awhile, especially if the day was a little cool. Then there came the first baseman's glove, which was an improvement, but now there is the wonderful first baseman's mitt, a big, comfortable pad that almost catches the ball without human assistance.

Do not take this last statement too literally, however, and figure on a mechanical catch. It is probably true that practise will assist in learning to catch a thrown ball better, but it is also true, and very true, that catching a thrown ball is more a natural accomplishment than one which is acquired artificially. There are boys and men who can catch a thrown ball better than others, and some of them are playing professional base ball. There are second basemen, for instance, who would not make good first baseman, because their weakness is in handling a thrown ball poorly. They manage to get on at second

base, especially as they are almost without exception good fielders of ground balls and excellent catchers of short, low flies, which are difficult to handle, but they do have a weakness on thrown balls and it is a weakness which usually is known, for ball players quickly perceive those things.

### The natural catcher of thrown balls.

The young player, the palms of whose hands are more concave than those of the other fellows, whose fingers are long and supple, whose knuckles bend easily, and whose hands are not thick through, is a natural catcher of thrown balls. He has some physical qualifications of a good first baseman. Provide him with a mitt and let the mitt become shaped to his hand and it is safe to say that he will make a good first baseman for the team.

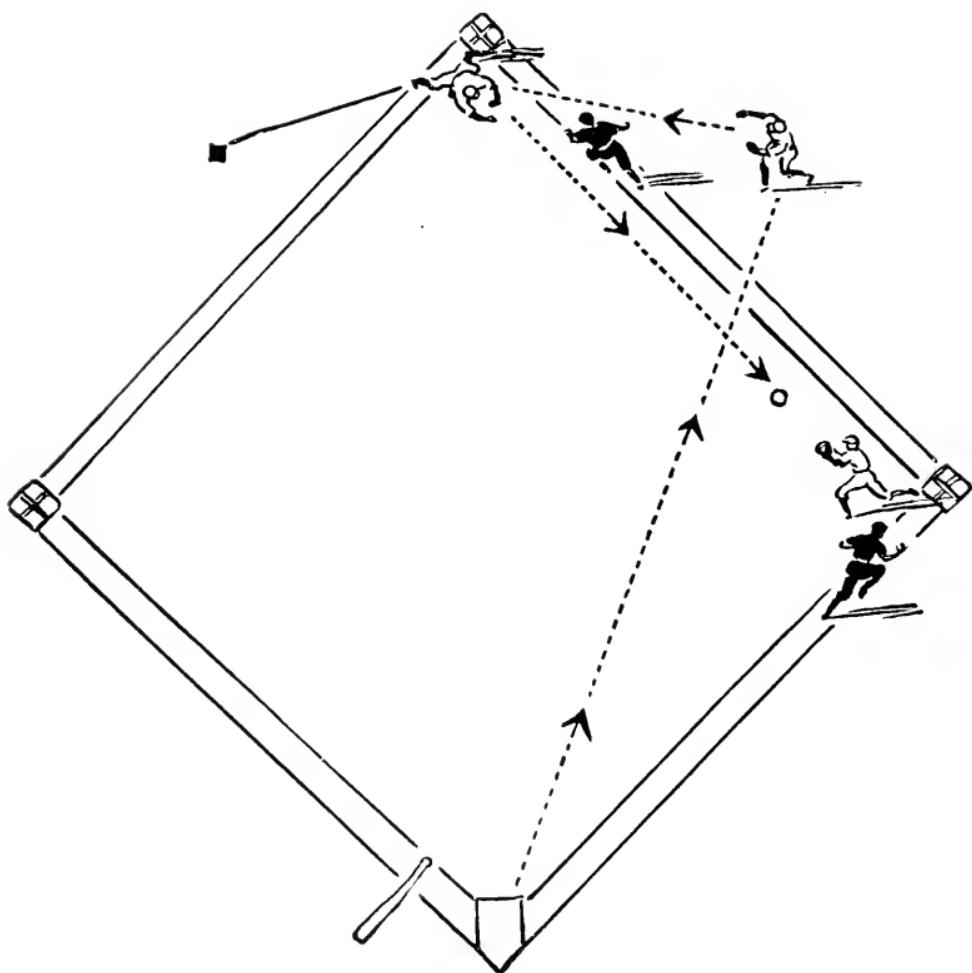
It is advisable for him to practise catching the ball with one hand, but it is not a good idea to make a practise of catching the ball with one hand when two would be the right thing. The gloved hand should be used for the one-hand catch. The first baseman's mitt bends easily enough to permit the hand to be doubled, and many wild throws can be saved and many bad grounders blocked if one-hand play is perfected. If the first baseman is a left-handed first baseman and fairly successful as a one-hand catch, he can reach far into the diamond in a close play to get the ball, because the glove is on his right hand toward the direction from which the throw is to come and his reach, combined with the one-hand catch, may be just the thing which completes the play and retires the batter.

Time will be well occupied in the practise of catching low throws. Get the infielders to throw low to you if they will. Some are afraid to do so for fear they will acquire the habit of throwing low. If they are unwilling to throw low, get one of the outfielders to give you practise, or a friend, for the first baseman who can play low throws accurately finds great favor in the eyes of his fellow players. Many and many an error he will save them and many and many a game he will save his team. Most of the plays at first base demand speed, and the man who throws the ball has no time to take aim. It is "grab and throw" with him. A good first baseman will tell his fielders to throw and trust to him to get the ball. When all have confidence of that character it is astonishing to note how the speed increases on both sides.

#### **Wonderful skill of first basemen.**

Many times a first baseman will catch fifty throws without dropping the ball. Some first baseman have made as many as three hundred plays without missing one. The boy and the beginner may not do this, although it is astonishing to note what some boys and youths have done in perfect playing of first base. For their reach and the size of their hands they are almost as perfect as their elders.

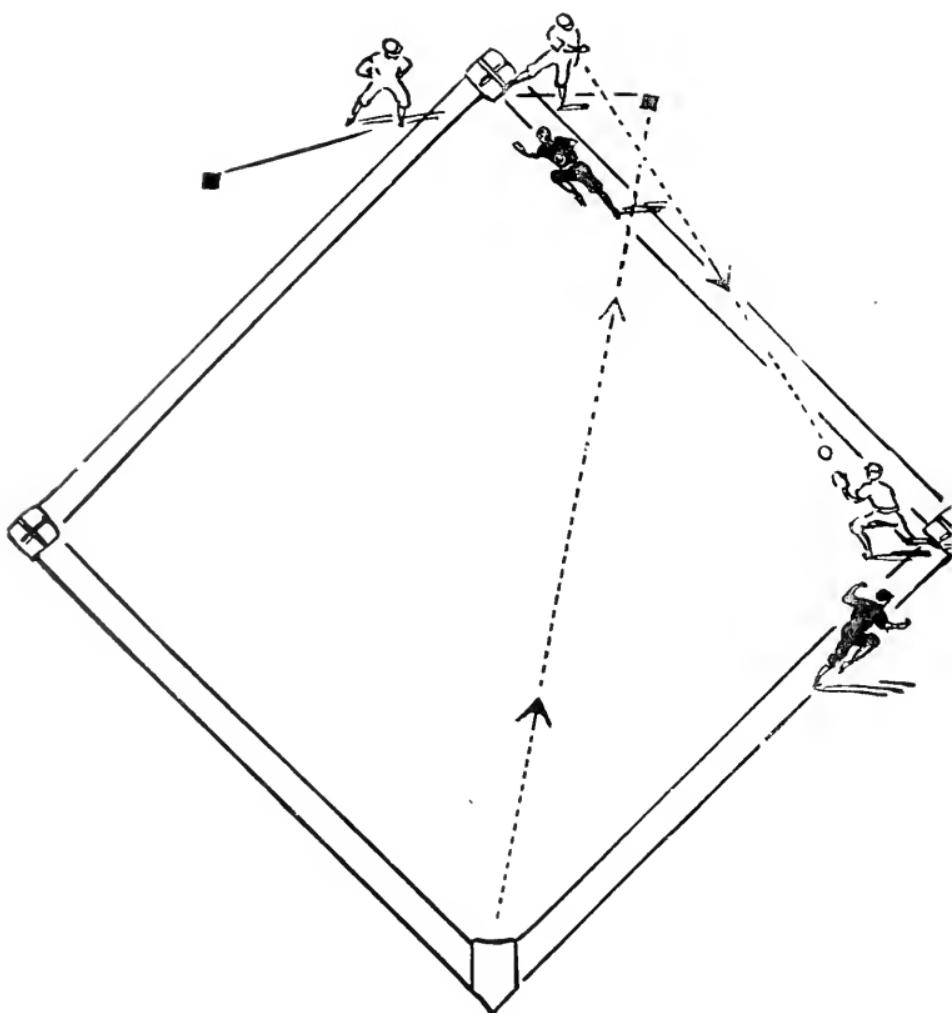
There is another play in which the first baseman must take his part. It is the catching of foul flies. To be successful in this the first baseman must be an infielder with some outfield skill. Many of the foul flies which the first baseman may handle drop to the ground as far



Double play—second to short to first. Broken line indicates course of ball as having been hit to second baseman, relayed to second, where shortstop covers bag, and then relayed to first. Continuous line indicates where shortstop left position to cover bag.

back as the stands on the larger fields. That is the equivalent of two-thirds of the way between first base and the right fielder. These fly hits are too far to one side for the right fielder to get them and the first baseman must learn to handle them. Plenty of lightly batted flies fall in his vicinity and these are the difficult little catches on which so many expert infielders fail. There is no fixed rule by which to get them. Speed is necessary, proper judgment of a fly ball is also necessary, and the mitt is a faithful helper once the first baseman becomes accustomed to it. It does not take long to learn how to use it to the best advantage, and some boys can make wonderfully good catches with it.

The first baseman must throw the ball as well as catch it. His hardest throw is from first base to third base. It is not a throw which occurs very often, but when made at the right time is one of the deadliest of infield plays, because it retires a runner at the base nearest home. His most accurate throw must be on bunted balls, because that play must be made on the instant. Some of the time it is not an overhand throw, but the ball is tossed. Throwing the ball is an art which comes from practise. It is a natural use of the muscles, and the force or speed with which a ball is thrown is dependent upon muscular strength, while direction and accuracy are the result of eyesight, good or fair, as possessed by the player. There is more than one style of throwing and it is well to try to learn all of them. You can't tell when a toss may be better than a long, overhand motion.



Double play—second baseman to first. Broken line shows course of ball hit to second baseman, who touched base and then relayed ball to first. Continuous line shows distance covered by second baseman to touch second base.

## What to Expect at First Base

From every position on the field the throw to the first baseman has its own identity. If throws were alive they might almost be said to have personality. That is, there would be contrary throws and throws of good manners and amiable disposition. If there were any connection between base ball and elves or sprites, or any of the "little folk" of the air, it could be believed that the ball is bewitched at times. It seems to act that way.

There is very much difference in the throws of a fielder and in the manner in which the ball comes to the player who is to catch it. Some fielders throw a light ball. The ball seems almost to insist on being caught. It rests easily when it strikes the glove and remains in it. Other fielders throw a heavy ball. It strikes the glove with force, feels like a dead weight in the hands, is never easy to catch and though "heavy," bounds out.

Many of the easiest throws to the first baseman come from second base. The shorter distance has something to do with it, because the second baseman, even if he puts power on the ball, must allow a little for being close to the first baseman. The most difficult throws from second base are those in which the second baseman has to hurry without taking any aim. They are likely to come high, low, to either side, and to be snapped or hurried.

Hard and high throws, as well as many low ones, are shot across the diamond by the shortstop. He gets the ball at as many difficult angles as the second baseman,

but as he has to throw further, is hurried more and is more inclined to be inaccurate for that reason.

The third baseman often is the best thrower of all. It is impossible to succeed at third base without a good arm, and when the ball is sent across the diamond it is the intent to see that it finds its mark. If he throws low, the first baseman must be careful to play the ball to the very best of his skill, and block it if he can. There is only the right fielder to back up the first baseman, and he cannot get well back of him until after a long run. If a third baseman throws high, so high that the first baseman cannot get the ball, it is quite sure to be a serious error. Most of the throws from the catcher are very fast and on a line. Whether the catcher is trying to get a batter at first base, or to catch a base-runner napping, he must be nimble and quick.

#### **Pitchers have become better throwers.**

There was a time when the pitcher bothered the first baseman a little by poor throwing. All in all, the pitchers are better throwers to first base than they were some years ago. They have to be, because watching first base is now one of the first principles of the game, and if the pitcher does not watch bases well, which means that he must throw to them well, he is lacking in a qualification which he should proceed to improve upon quickly.

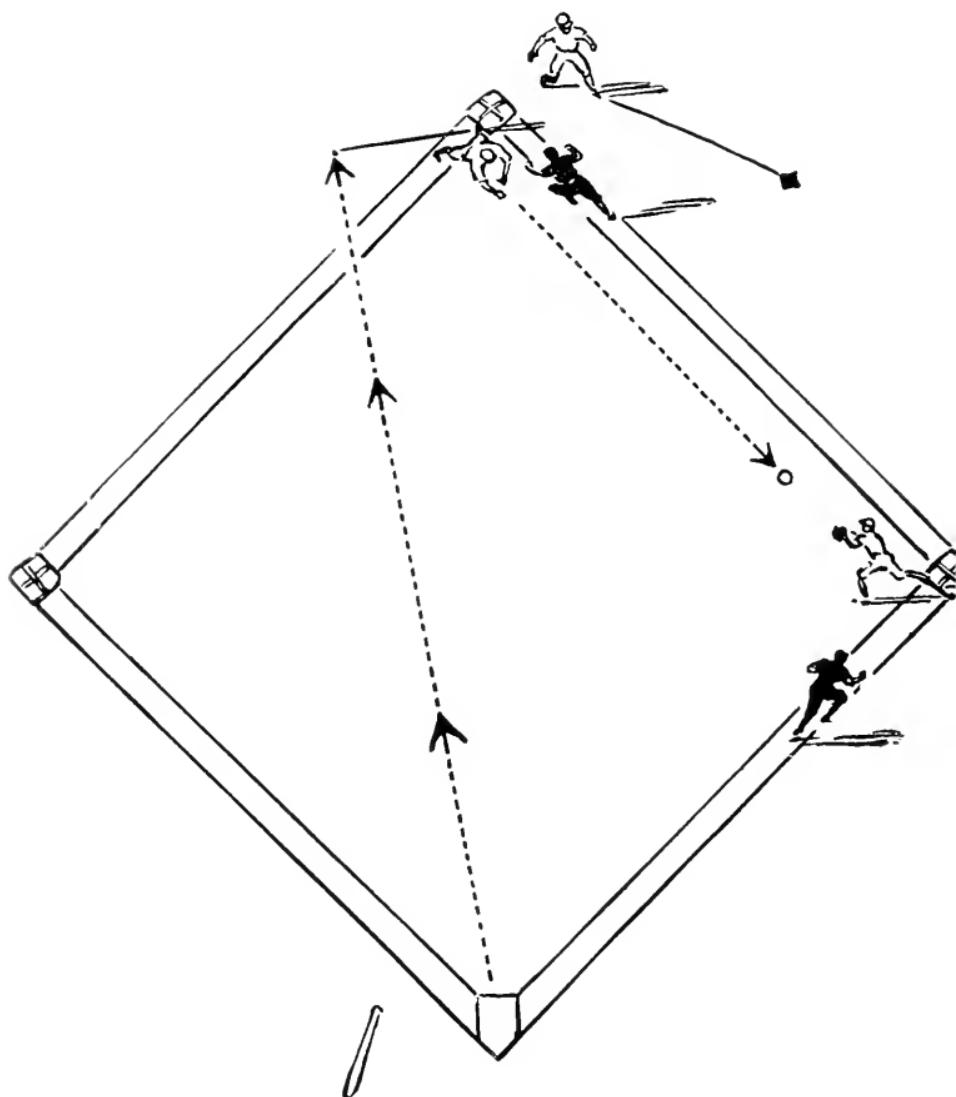
When it is possible to do so face the point from which the ball is coming and hold up your hands as a guide to the thrower. If the play is quick, there will be no chance to do anything of that kind. If you can do it, even as little as it may seem to be, it will assist in providing a

target for the throw. Help out a slow throw by reaching for the ball to your limit. Help to put a fast runner out by reaching as far as possible for the ball. If the ball settles securely in your hands before he can touch the base it does not matter how far you are extended, so that your foot is on the base.

When the throw is low, try to smother the ball on the ground before it has a chance to bound up. To "smother" the ball means to cover it on the ground with the mitt so that it cannot bound. Even if you do not get the runner out it is safe to say that you will have stopped a wild throw, and that is as important. If the ball is smothered not infrequently you will be able to get hold of it in such a manner that it can be caught. You will be able to get your glove between the ball and the earth.

A left-handed batsman will give the first baseman more trouble than a right-handed batsman. There are right-handed batsmen who hit naturally to right field. If you belong to a league try to get them in your mind as quickly as possible and try to remember their faces when they go to bat. Left-handed batsmen are prone to cut the ball down the right field baseline and when they bunt are frequently the best of bunters. They will keep a first baseman in action most of the time. Slow pitchers will more likely be batted toward right field than left field by left-handed batters. Curves which are caught by the bat just as the ball breaks go scuttling toward first base at a tremendous clip.

Take note of the field so that you will observe where the second bound on a batted ball usually starts. Almost all base ball diamonds have their line of break for the



Double play—shortstop to first baseman. Broken line shows course of ball to shortstop; continuous line indicates shortstop running distance to second base and relay of ball to first is shown by broken line from second to first.

ball. If you are too far back, the bound will come too low; if too far forward, the bound will be short, which is one of the meanest types of bounders to handle.

You must act in unison with the pitcher to hold the base-runner on first base. This means that you will have to do a great deal of running to and fro when there is a runner on first base. While the pitcher has the ball in hand you must be on the base, but you must not leave the base until you are sure that the pitcher has delivered the ball. Should you do so, he is likely to turn suddenly and only to find that you have run down the base line and the runner has followed suit, but as his throw went with the turn the ball is on its way to right foul territory as fast as it can travel.

With a weak-throwing catcher keep the runner as close to first base as possible. Two extra steps for the runner probably will mean a stolen base, and stolen bases often develop into runs. The runner will follow you from the base. If you go a short distance, so will he. If you go a long distance he is likely to do the same thing. Keep him tight to the base when a run threatens.

Some time ago there was a play attempted by which the second baseman edged over toward first base while the first baseman played away from the base. The second baseman would make a sudden dash for the base while the first baseman remained standing. Occasionally a runner was caught that way. It is almost impossible to make such a play now. The coacher keeps the runner informed and in addition to that the first baseman must be on hand all of the time to be the second man in play where the pitcher is trying to start something. The first baseman always should be ready for a double play.

Reference has been made to an agreement being had with the pitcher concerning the fielding of a bunt. If it has been arranged that the pitcher is to try to get the ball the first baseman must be sure to hold first base. If he does not, both pitcher and catcher may endeavor to field the hit. Sometimes the catcher can get it a little better than the pitcher. Whichever gets it will pick up the ball to throw hurriedly to first. If the first baseman is not on the base the batter will get to it with ease. The second baseman may be able to get over to first in such an emergency, but he cannot be criticised if he fails to do so, because he is expected to guard his own position in case the batter should decide not to bunt but to bat the ball hard.

#### **Pitcher and first baseman must have understanding.**

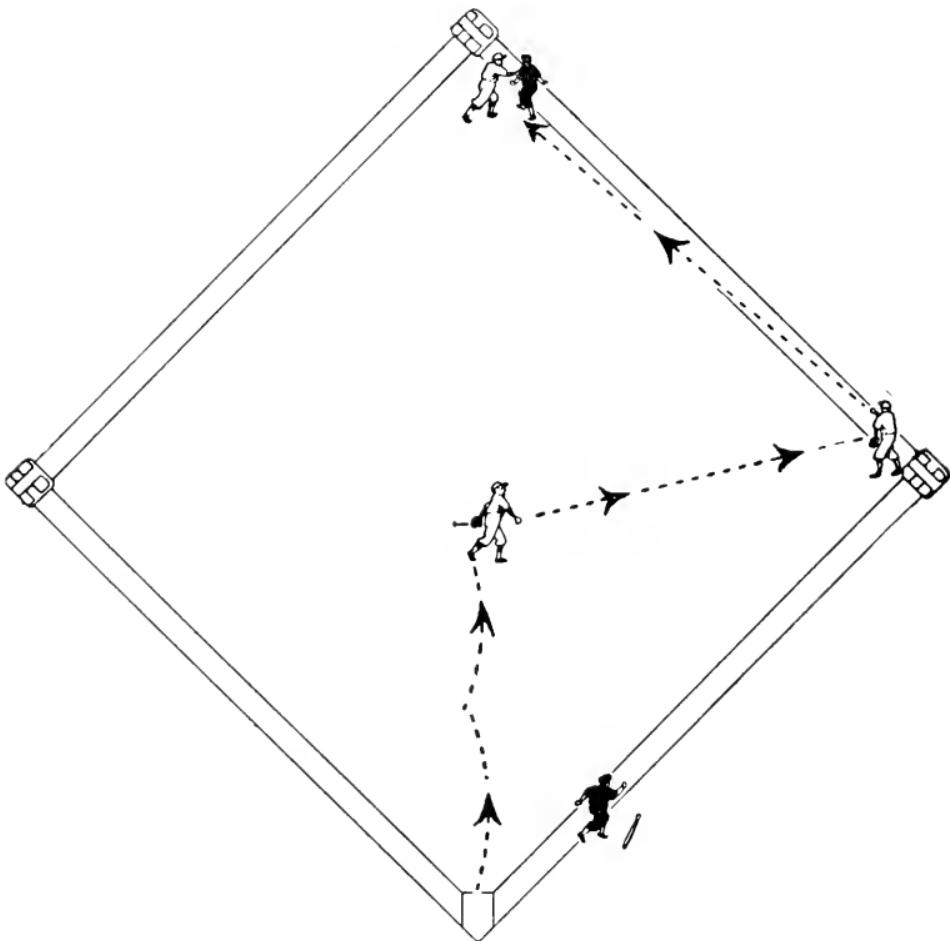
If the first baseman is to field a bunt he should be sure that the pitcher understands that he is to cover first base instead of the baseman. Sometimes when a bunt is expected to be made with a runner on second base the first baseman, who is standing at first base, runs far into the infield toward home plate to get the ball. The pitcher looks out for the ball, if it rolls toward third base, and the second baseman fills in at first base. The play is to get the runner from second base to third base and if there is a failure to do so for any reason the opportunity is open to turn around and make a play on the batter and retire him at first base.

Many infield flies which would seem to belong to a player in another position are taken by the first baseman. The reason for this is the first baseman's mitt. All other

things being equal, it is believed that if the first baseman can get underneath the ball he will make a surer catch with his big mitt than an infielder who is playing with a glove which does not have so much surface.

When there are two out the first baseman plays in his regular position back of the base and in short right field unless there is a runner on third base. Sometimes when there is a runner on third base the first baseman plays away from the bag. It depends upon the score. It is also the case that the first baseman may play away from the bases when there is a runner on first base, another runner on third and a batter at the plate who is a hard and dangerous right field hitter. It is considered to be better policy to make sure of the batter than to worry about the third-base runner. If the batter should hit savagely, with one run needed to tie the score or a run needed to win with a score tied, and hit toward first base it is certain the first baseman would have a better chance to retire the side when playing away from the base than when playing directly on it. Furthermore, nothing would be gained by holding the runner to first base if the score was a tie, because if the runner scored from third that would win the game.

When there is a runner on third base and less than two hands out, it is not usually good policy for the first baseman to try to catch a deep foul to right field. The moment that he catches the ball the runner may try to score, even though it was a foul fly. If the first baseman must turn around to throw home, and it happens about seven times out of ten that he must do so, the throw may be poor, or too late, and the runner will have made



A double play that is occasionally made—pitcher to first base to second base. It must be remembered, however, that the second part of the play is not a force and the runner must be touched with the ball. It is necessitated only when second base is not covered in time and there would be danger of not only the batter running to first being safe, but also the runner who was on first base being safe because of speed in getting to second.

his tally with comparative ease. If the foul is not caught the runner must go back to third base and remain there until the pitcher has the ball in possession again, just as he would on any foul which was not caught by the fielder.

### **Base-runner by holding base prevented double play.**

One important play that calls for quick thinking occurred in a world series.

A runner was on first, when the batsman hit a grounder to the second baseman who was playing almost half way between second base and first base. The second baseman threw to the first baseman, who while standing on the base, touched the base-runner who had not made any attempt to go to second despite the oncoming runner who had just hit the ball. Many of the spectators, and even the first baseman, who was comparatively new, assumed that a double play had occurred and were astounded when the umpire called the base-runner safe who had held his base, the runner to first being the only one to be called out.

To obtain a double play the procedure should have been as follows: The first baseman should have stepped off the base to receive the ball. Then he should have touched the runner, no matter where he stood, on the base or off, the first baseman still keeping his feet away from the base. That being done, the first baseman by touching the base before the batter arrived there would have completed a double play. When he touched the base before touching the runner who was to go to second he ended the force play. With the batter out, the runner who was on first base originally was entitled to remain there.



Blocking a runner at second base in such a manner that the fielder is likely to come into collision with the runner. Not a good way to play the base, because it is apt to be harmful both to runner and baseman.

## THE SECOND BASEMAN

Second base has been called the "keystone" position, and in a way it is. It may be likened to the center stone that holds the arch of base ball together.

The second baseman must be observant of every play in a ball game. In most of the plays he is directly or indirectly concerned. He is always concerned when there is a runner on second base, when there is a player at bat, when there is a ball to be fielded from the outfield if by chance he is a good thrower, or even better, an unusually good thrower. He is concerned when there is a runner on first base, and while he does not play the position of shortstop, he is concerned in most of the plays which fall to the lot of the shortstop, as these two infield positions represent more joint play and more team work than any other two positions in the infield.

In addition to being wide awake every minute the second baseman must be speedy of foot, expert in judging ground balls, an accurate thrower—it is important that accuracy of throwing be more considered than power of throwing—quick in motion, especially so in the use of the arms, a good catcher of thrown balls, which are not always thrown with the utmost of precision, and a good thinker. A mechanical second baseman can play base ball, but he cannot play it to the high state of perfection which will be displayed by a second baseman who thinks all of the time.

He should be cool, with presence of mind, and if he can think out what the opposing players are trying to

do so much the better. It is not to be expected that he will be a mind reader, but if he studies his opponents he will soon begin to play right for them and, so far as the average game of base ball is concerned, that will mean that he will be playing right most of the time.

### Requisites for a second baseman.

It is not necessary that a second baseman be of any special height. A taller first baseman does have an advantage. There have been short second basemen who were as good as any in base ball, any except the star players. There have been thin second basemen and stout second basemen. There have been second basemen who were broad shouldered, and second basemen who were stoop shouldered. There have been second basemen who were "roly poly," and other second basemen who were all angles. Most of them have made good. On the whole there have been more second basemen of medium height who were the stars in major league base ball than there have been second basemen of unusual stature.

Good hands and good feet are prime requisites. Good condition is always necessary, because the second baseman of all the players must be on the move. He cannot play, and play well, in one spot. He must be on the base, off the base and all around that section of a ball field of which second base is the center. Long fingers are fine for a second baseman. The glove helps him on his glove hand, but there is nothing better to trap the ball in the gloved hand than long, loose jointed fingers on the ungloved hand. They fold over the ball and hold it securely. A ball poorly grasped is the start of many of

the errors which do so much to lose ball games of importance in championship races.

### Throw accurately to the catcher.

The second baseman will have to throw the ball to the first baseman a great deal, and his longest throw will be to the catcher on return throws to the plate. He should be able to make the throw across the diamond with as much accuracy as the catcher makes his from behind the bat. A catcher who cannot make this throw will not last in the professional circuits, for it will be only a question of time when his weakness is found out, and opposing teams will try double steals with confidence. A second baseman who cannot return the throw to the plate must meet a similar fate.

It is also a very good thing if the second baseman is a field general. It may result in his being appointed captain of his team. It is an advantage to have the team captain play at second base. It is not positively necessary, but it helps, because the second baseman is so closely related to those plays which have to do with the advancing of runs, and the scoring of runs. The second baseman is supposed to be in touch with the bench, and know what plans are in the manager's mind to keep the other team from scoring, when it threatens to do so.

If the second baseman is made field captain he should apply himself more than ever to the task of thinking out plays and thinking out ways to cancel the good plays of the other fellows. More than that, the second baseman, if captain, should not be like one or two captains of major league history who after they were appointed to the posi-

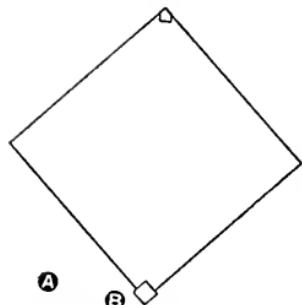
tion were so overcome with the responsibility of it that they forgot to give directions at the very moment when directions were needed. That kind of captaining does not help.

### Second baseman must time his steps.

It is essential that the second baseman know his own speed. He will have so many hits of so many different kinds coming to him that he must learn to measure his ability to arrive at a certain point on time. There can be no hit-and-miss playing around second base. If there is, the second baseman will soon learn to regret it. A good second baseman does not grope for the ball. He comes up with it on the bound, if it is within his ability so to do, and he makes his reach for it at the most timely moment of probable rebound from the earth. Because he can play the ball that way he makes the game much easier for himself.

There is no infielder, not even the shortstop, who will be likely to be a part of more double plays. The second baseman's skill in starting double plays cannot be made too perfect. The chances are that practise will assist in helping to get the ball away quickly on throws. That is one of the things where practise does come in handy. Do not think that practise is not good at all times. The only thing to do is not to over practise when the exercise of practising is severe. Too much hard throwing is bad. A little is a good thing to keep the arm in condition and the eye in trim.

## Second Baseman on the Field



A—Usual position of second baseman with no one on bases or when he is playing for the batter. B—Second baseman moves over to B when there is a runner on second unless batter is left-handed.

When the game begins, if the first batter happens to be a left-hand hitter, the second baseman usually plays well over toward first base, about fifteen feet behind the base line that runs between first base and second base. Sometimes if the batter is a hard hitter the second baseman will play deeper. If the batter is a pronounced center field hitter, as some batters are, the second baseman will play more toward second base than toward first base. Now and then a second baseman has been daring enough to play right close to second base, although it is better to give the shortstop opportunity to cover that ground, because the batter, even though he be a regular center field hitter, is likely to meet a curve or a straight ball just right and pull the ball hard toward right field.

If the first batter is a right-hand batter the second baseman will take up his stand about twenty feet away from second base, perhaps twenty-five feet. He will not go further than that if the batter is known to be a left field hitter. If the batter is reputed to be a right field hitter as well as a left field hitter it is best for the second baseman to move to the position which he would occupy for a right field batter. A right-hand batter who can hit to right field generally hits hard and the second baseman

will find that the grounders which such a batter knocks along the turf, are speedy balls which are not easy to handle.

The changes made in the pitching rules appear to have changed the manner in which second base should be played. There had been a custom on the part of the second basemen when a speedy pitcher was on the plate to play further out than when a slow pitcher was doing the work. Most of the batters met the ball so much harder that it became best to play a deep second base. If the second baseman advanced too close to the line the ball went by him at a speed which prevented accurate handling of it. All previous ideas about playing second base will have to undergo a little modification if the pitchers are going to be hit as hard every year as they were in the first year of the changed rules. There is no doubt about this.

### **Playing on the infield.**

When there is a runner on third base, and no one out, or perhaps one out, the manager of the team may wish the second baseman to play within the infield line, hoping that a bounder may be stopped and the runner be thrown out at the plate if he tries to score. If he does not try to score but is held in check, so much the better, and better yet if the batter is thrown out at first base.

A batter who is a fast runner but who is not a hard hitter sometimes may be stopped by having the second baseman play closer to the line than usual. Before this is undertaken the side in the field should be sure that there is an understanding between the second baseman

and the pitcher. Should there fail to be, the batsman may cut a slow ball past the second baseman and upset all the plans made against him. It may be a hit, too, which the second baseman would have stopped had he been playing back where it was customary for him to play. That adds to the success of the other team.

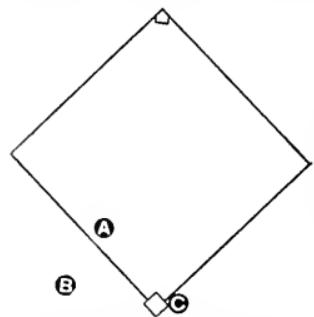
When there is a runner on first base and the second baseman has reason to believe that the runner will steal, he should not get too far away from the base, if he is the fielder who is to cover the bag when the catcher throws. If he incorrectly estimates the distance between him and the base, in his haste to get over to second he will have no chance to square himself for the throw. The catcher may make a poor throw, and between the combination of poor throw and poor position on the part of the second baseman to take care of the throw, there will probably be a miss.

In a way the second baseman is a roving outfielder. He plays the midway outfield. Many short flies which cannot be handled by the right fielder or the center fielder will fall to his lot. There will be a number of difficult foul fly catches to be made on the right field foul line, which neither the right fielder nor the first baseman can get. There is a sort of "No Man's Land" in center field which if not played by the second baseman will not be played at all and in which many short flies are likely to drop for safe hits. It will thus be noted that the duties of the second baseman are various and manifold.

If he is a good long distance thrower he will be of the greatest assistance to his team by his ability to relay the ball from the first throw of the outfielder. The relay

throw is used more than ever. One reason for this is the lack of good throwers among outfielders. Another is that better accuracy and greater speed are sometimes obtained. If there is a fast and speedy thrower to make the relay the ball will be placed better for the catcher. The outfielder who essays the long throw home, if he is a very good outfielder, will get the ball near the plate in about three times out of five. If there is a good relay thrower he will place the ball on the plate territory pretty much every time that he undertakes to throw it.

### Must know the shortstop's plans.



A—Playing inside for base-runner who is liable to score from third with less than two hands out. B—Playing for batter. C—Shortstop virtually playing second base to hold a runner on that base.

So far as playing for base-runners is concerned, the second baseman always must have an understanding with the shortstop. With two men to take care of second base it is not good base ball when both fail because of information which is so easily found out.

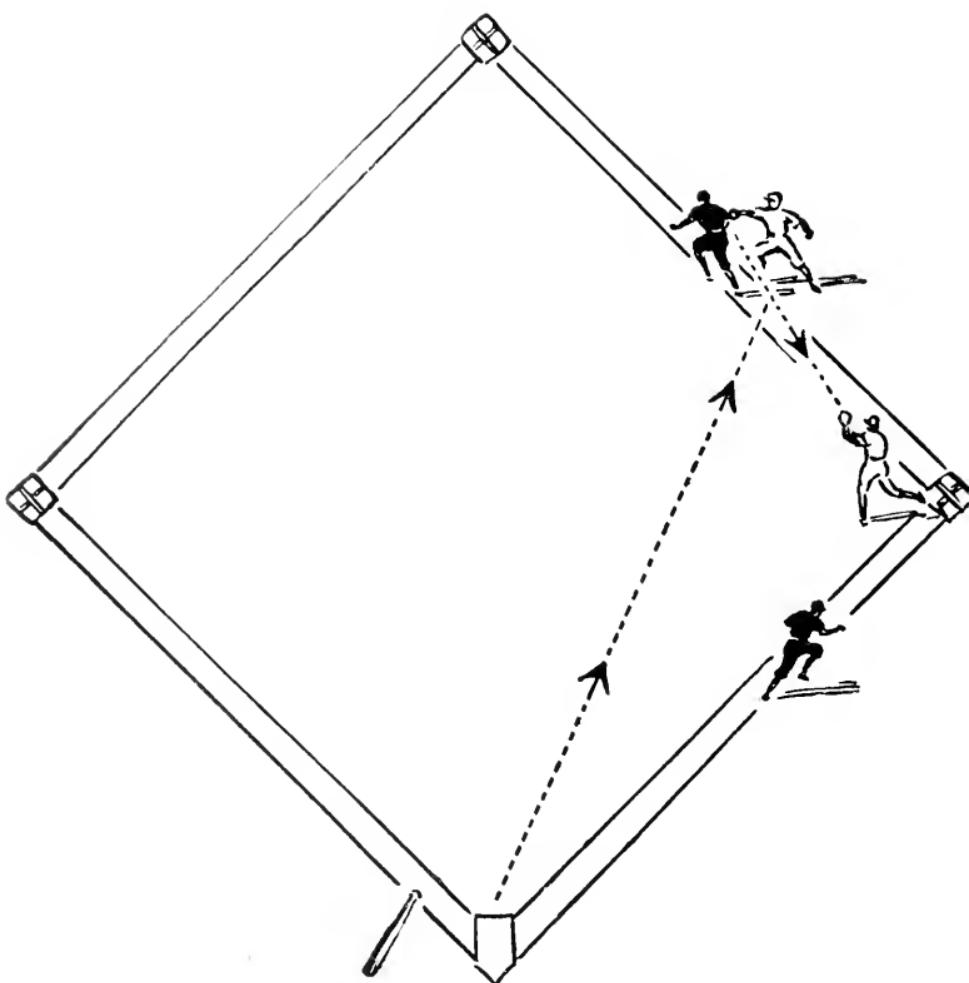
When there are runners on second and third bases or when there is a runner on third base with less than two out and a chance to tie the score or win the game, the second baseman often takes a position on the infield in front of the base line from first base to second base.

## The Second Baseman and the Runner

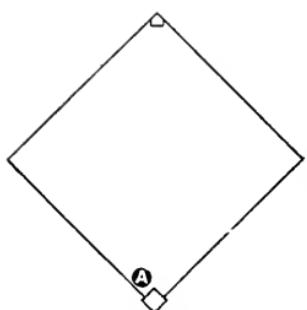
The first baseman begins to have his troubles with base-runners when the batter is safe at first. The second baseman's trouble begins at the same time, and continues. The next base after first is second, and the second baseman well knows that every effort will be made by the runner and by the other players of the runner's side to advance the man to the next base.

If the runner is successful in arriving at second base the second baseman still has his worries. Instead of waiting for the runner to come to him he now has him on his hands. He must watch him and try to keep him as close to the base as possible. He will have assistance from the shortstop, but with both of them to watch the runner the latter will prove to be an annoying chap, especially if he is a little daring. A venturesome runner will try to get as far up the base line toward third as he can, a good start being just the thing if batter hits.

If the runner on first base tries to steal, the second baseman, if he is to cover the base, must play in such manner that he will be on the spot whenever the catcher throws the ball. He must not play directly on the bag and base line, to which reference will be made later in remarks about blocking runners, but he must play in such a manner that he can touch the runner if the latter tries to slide along the base line. It will not be a hard task to touch the runner if the latter does not slide, but it is the exception rather than the rule when a base-runner goes into second base standing up.



Double play. Second baseman touches base-runner on the line and then relays ball to first.



A — Second baseman can tag base-runner easiest and surest by playing close to the base line, just inside of the base and toward its first base side.

The best way to tag a runner is not to stand on the line as he comes headforemost or feet foremost, but to stand in such a manner that he can be touched when he slides by. It is not always possible to do this, because if the catcher has been hurried the ball is likely to come anywhere except to the right spot, but the play can be practised, and the more expert the baseman can become in it the better. One of the

best second basemen in touching runners who ever played base ball in the National League was Stricker of the old Cleveland team. There wasn't much more of him than a pinch of salt, but it did not make any difference how the runners arrived at second base, he touched them before they got into the bag. How he got the ball seemed to be a miracle sometimes, but he got it, and with a quick jab he "put it on the runner" as the latter slid by. It was common report that if Stricker caught the ball the runner might as well walk back to the bench, yet Stricker never stood on the line if he could avoid it.

#### Second baseman as the pivot.

The batter may hit the ball with a runner on first and then will come the possibility of a double play, in which the second baseman will be the pivot. That is, he will be the player to whom the ball will be first thrown. Upon receiving it he must turn and throw it to first as quickly and as straight as he can to get the batter. The second

baseman is the most important pivot man on a ball team. In some games he pivots about five or six times. He is likely to receive the ball from the pitcher, an outfielder or the shortstop. Occasionally he receives a throw from the first baseman, frequently from the third baseman, and must return the ball to them. All of these plays follow the base-runner.

The ball comes to him from both sides and from in front of him and behind him, because he is in the center of the general playing field. There is action all around him. The first baseman and the third baseman are over at separate corners of the field, but not the second baseman. On the contrary there are four corners surrounding him.

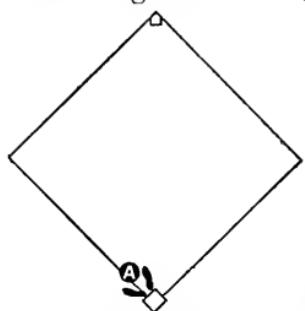
#### **Often engaged in a “run-up.”**

Frequently the second baseman must join with others in a run-up of a base-runner. There are few run-ups in which the second baseman does not take a part. Always remember in running a player along the base line that it is advisable to chase him as far back as seems consistent toward the base to which he is retreating. The faster that he can be made to run back the better it will be, because when the ball is thrown to the baseman the runner will have much difficulty to turn around and get out of harm's way. When the ball is thrown and the runner cannot be touched, drop out of the line and let the player who is behind take part in the play. In the meantime run back of him, so that he will be backed up if the ball is returned again. Never drop out of the play and stand looking at it as if it were a picture on a bill-

board. If there is one fault which is shown quicker than another it is a baseman's lack of knowing what to do when a runner has been trapped when trying to reach one base from another.

If the throw to second base were always perfect, and if every pitcher were perfect in delivering the ball on time, there would be fewer stolen bases than there are. The catcher, too often, is hurried and throws the ball to one side. The pitcher may have a slow windup, and that will give the runner a start from first base of ten feet or more.

Accurate throws can be made by the catcher to the pitcher and the ball relayed by the pitcher to the second baseman in time to get the fastest of runners. There is one thing to take into account in that statement. The throws must be perfect and the runner must go the full ninety feet between bases. It is evident, therefore, that much depends upon the catcher and the pitcher as well as upon the second baseman, and also that much depends upon how the second baseman handles himself after he gets the ball, as has previously been explained.



A—Blocking base-runner by deliberately standing between him and the base is bad playing.

The practise of blocking base-runners is to be avoided and discouraged. In the first place it is strictly against the rules of base ball to block a base without having the ball in one's possession. Now and then there may be an instance where the ball is hidden, when it is difficult to tell whether the ball is in the possession of the fielder. On

the other hand there are instances that happen again and again in which the baseman deliberately sets himself on the base line long before the ball has got to him with the purpose of preventing the runner from touching the base.

It is a play which is dangerous to both men. For the most part, of course, it is more dangerous to the slider than to the player who is standing still and is braced for the shock of collision when two come together. Frequently it results in disputes. A ball player who has been blocked off a base and shaken up severely is likely to forget himself under the stress of the moment and engage in a quarrel.

If a lightweight fielder tries to block a base-runner the former may be so bruised and jarred that he will not be able to play the base as well in the future. A very heavy man who strikes a fielder at full speed, bumps into him with force that means hurt and it may affect his future playing. Those who encourage the blocking of base-runers are not mindful of the best interests of base ball.

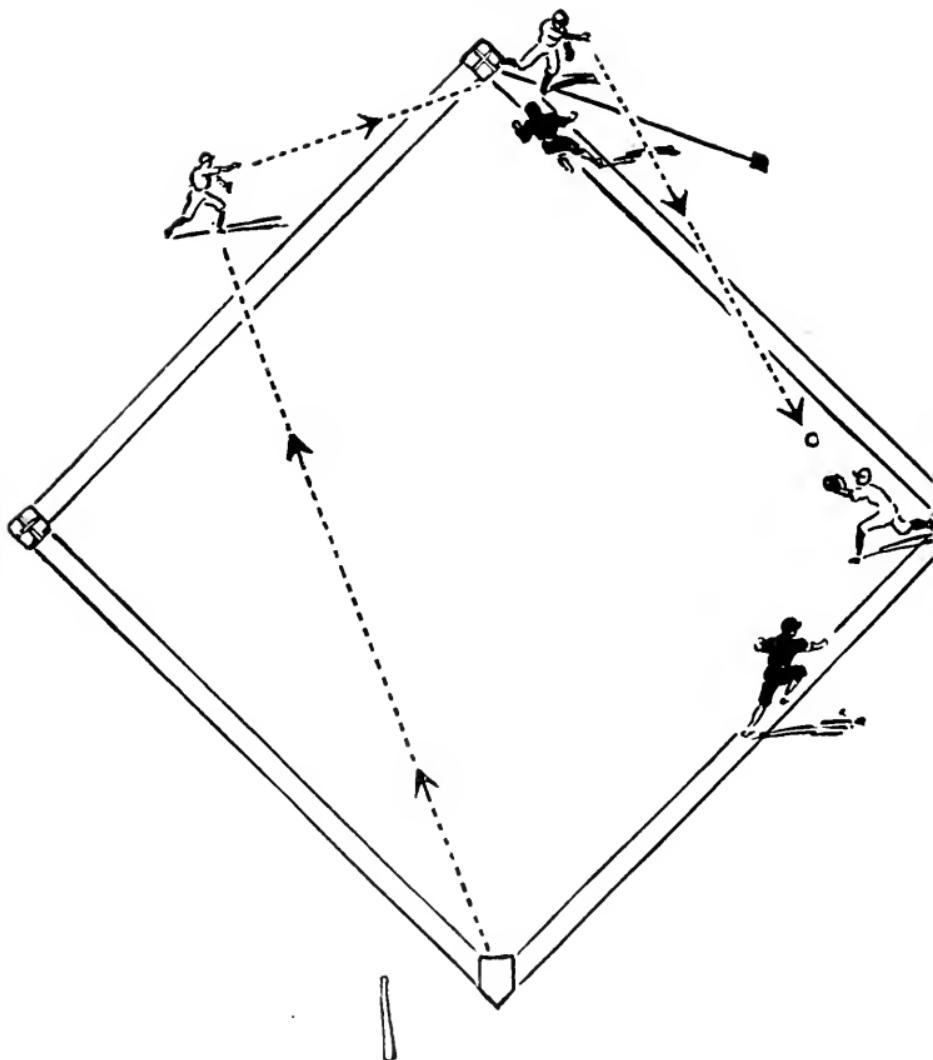
### **Stolen bases are usually close plays.**

Almost all steals of second base are close plays. If the baseman ventures to play on top of the base he will lose some because the runner will dodge him. If the baseman will play off the base and a little toward first base, where he can handle himself cleverly, and where he can escape the feet of the runner, if the latter attempts to slide, he will get his put out much easier and with far less risk to himself and to the runner.

Stand with the feet apart but so that the balance can be retained. The feet of the runner are fairly sure to slip between or around the baseman's. As they do the runner can be touched out. This position, about two feet from the base, will bother the runner who is trying to use the hook slide, and there is no other position which will bother him more. When the baseman is standing as described it is a very difficult matter for the runner to swing his feet around so that he can make the base. He is likely to be caught with one foot on one side of the base, and the other foot on the other side, but neither touching the canvas. As soon as he has been touched by the ball get out of the way.

#### **Awkward position to touch base-runner.**

It must be evident that if the baseman stands on the base and reaches out to touch the runner he will find himself in an awkward position. He will be like the boy who is bending over the creek, expecting every minute to fall in while he reaches in vain for the flower that is floating by on the surface of the water.



Double play—shortstop to second base to first base. Broken line shows course of ball from batter and during play; continuous line shows where second baseman left his position to cover bag.

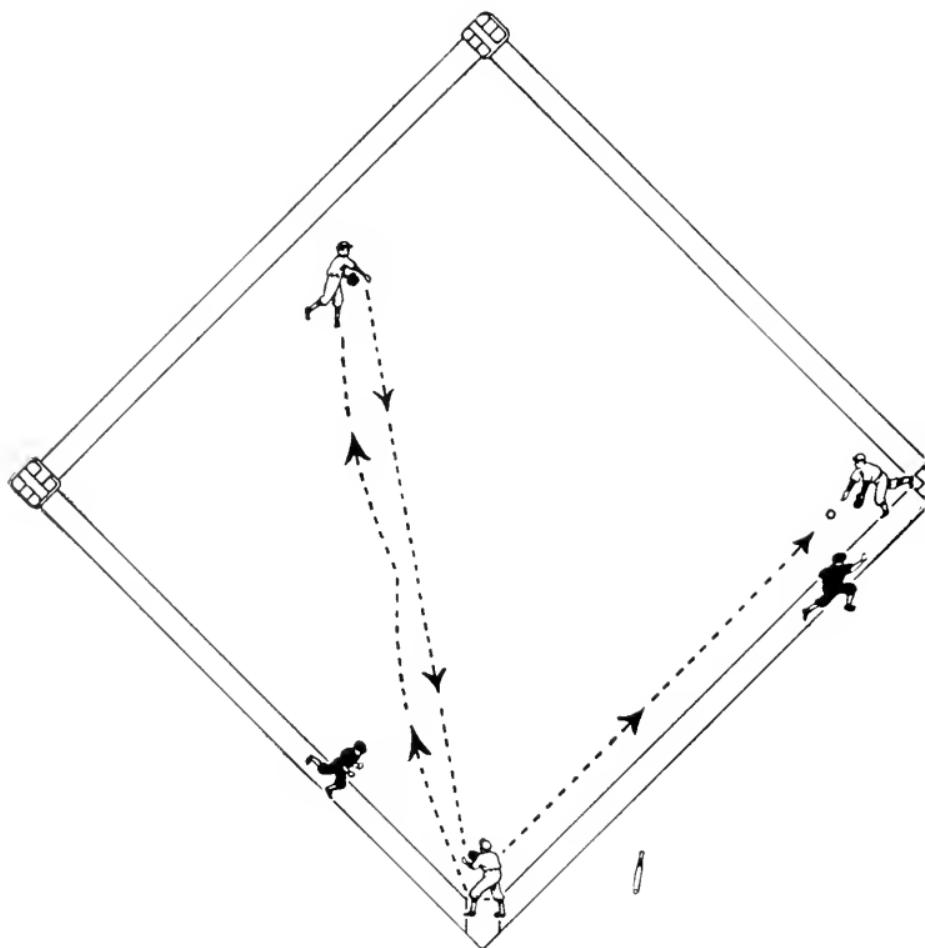
## Throwing by the Second Baseman

Try to learn to throw in every conceivable manner by which a throw can be made. In a spirit of fun the writer was about to suggest that it is advisable to learn to throw standing on your head. After all that is not so ridiculous as it may sound. Basemen have thrown out runners from a sitting position, while lying prostrate, and even while their backs were turned to another baseman.

The second baseman cannot always have his feet braced on the ground, nor can he pause and take deliberate aim. He lives in a whirling of seconds, each one of them presenting a play that is quite different from the play which may have just preceded it.

Learn to throw overhand. If that is the natural way of the young player he will have little to learn but much to practise for direction. Learn also to throw underhand. It is of vital importance that every second baseman knows how to throw the ball underhand. Learn to toss the ball, and learn not only to toss it forward but learn to toss it with a backhand motion. That play is likely to come in handy in any game, and more emphatically so after the player has become accustomed to the position of second base and has learned to hop around nimbly and to be in the right place at the right time.

The underhand throw is the best timesaver the second baseman possesses. There have been old fellows in baseball whose throwing arms were not what they had been, who played season after season because they could snap



Double play. This is a play that requires fast work. Batter hits to shortstop, who throws to catcher, latter touches runner and gets ball in time to put out runner to first.

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the ball to first base underhand. What their arms might have lost in the strength needed by hard overhand throwing was not missed, because they saved time by throwing underhand and were every bit as accurate as they had been when they used the overhand throw.

#### Players preferred the underhand throw.

There have been infielders who gave up throwing overhand as much as they could. They said that it did not pay. They could get a runner out some seconds quicker by using an underhand throw and were sure they were as certain of their man. Some would not throw overhand from the beginning. It was almost impossible to get Doolan, the Philadelphia shortstop, to throw the ball overhand. Devlin, the New York third baseman, threw both ways, and preferred the underhand motion for short plays. Evers of the Chicagos, after a year's experience, used the underhand throw almost exclusively. Others could be cited, but there is no necessity for doing so, as quite all will give testimony to the same effect.

In the earlier years of base ball there was much more underhand throwing and sidearm throwing than there have been in recent years. When the overhand throw came into general use it seemed so much more impressive that many came to use it who would have been better off if they had stuck to their old boyhood way of getting the ball away. Some were improved by the use of the overhand throw. With others it was quite the reverse.

Underhand throwing is valuable for a second baseman because he will have as many short throws to make as any player on the field, and there is no reason why he

cannot make them as accurately by throwing underhand as he can if he tries to throw overhand.

#### Many movements to throw overhand.

To throw the ball overhand the fielder must come to an erect position after he has picked up the ball from the ground. Then he must draw his arm back to throw. After that he will have to bring it forward again and deliver the ball. Every motion that he makes is a motion of time, and time means delay. In throwing underhand picking up the ball and releasing the ball can be made continuous. Frequently they are all one motion. If the second baseman is running toward first base he stoops down, gets the ball, and before he is erect he has sent it whirling through the air to the first baseman, scarcely pausing from the time that he began his pursuit of the ball to throw the runner out. Decisions at first base are made on single steps. Hundreds of decisions during a year hinge on one yard. The underhand throw is always one step faster than the overhand throw, and sometimes more than one step faster. Hence it is evident that the underhand throw will get more close plays at first base than the overhand throw can hope to get. There is no lost time nor lost motion in the underhand throw.

The underhand throw is developed by practise—providing the beginner does not possess the knack of sending the ball around in that way. With the average ball player it does not take much practise. The boys to a large extent throw underhand naturally. Too many coaches and instructors take them away from underhand throwing when they should not do so.

The average runner covers about twenty-seven feet per second in going to first base from home plate. Knowing as we do how many plays there are at first base in which three feet give the decision one way or the other, we can figure how much the underhand throw will be worth to a second baseman if he can beat the runner by one step.

Never use one hand to stop the ball or catch it where both hands can be used. On the contrary, never hesitate to try to catch or stop the ball with one hand when it is impossible to get both hands on it. That is the very best rule that the second baseman can follow in regard to playing with one hand. When the ball is on the right side, where it is out of the question to get in front of it, go after it with the right hand and do the same thing on the left side, but never stop trying to get in front of the ball if it is possible to do so, and try to stop it with both hands. Base ball is a two-handed game in which one-hand plays occasionally are excellent.

There are second basemen who practise catching the ball and touching the runner with one motion, using but one hand to do so. When they succeed it is a fine play, but it is not a sure play, and it never will be. The second baseman who catches the ball in the good old-fashioned way in both hands, touches the runner and gets out of his way at the same time, is the player who will be more likely to arise to the emergency than the flashy player who will be almost sure to try his one-hand play at the most vital point in the game and fail when success means everything to his team.

Practise in trying the one-hand catch is all right. There is no objection to it. There may be a day when

such a play will be just the thing at the right time. Placing dependency on the one-hand catch is another matter. There have been ball players who were possibly as good with one hand as they were with both, and better with one hand than many ball players are with both hands, but such players are the exception. It would be no task for them to play the ball with one hand, but it is a natural gift to do so, and it is not a safe play with a player to whom it is not natural.

#### **Touch the base with foot nearest to it.**

The second baseman should touch the base with that foot which is nearest to it. Presumably the beginner will think this is needless advice, for he will not consider that the second baseman would be likely to do anything else. It is not needless, as the second baseman plays on both sides of the base. The first baseman does not play on both sides of his base. There is no occasion for him to get out on foul ground and play first base outside the line. The second baseman first is on the right side and then on the left side of the second base and he must learn to play both sides with certainty.

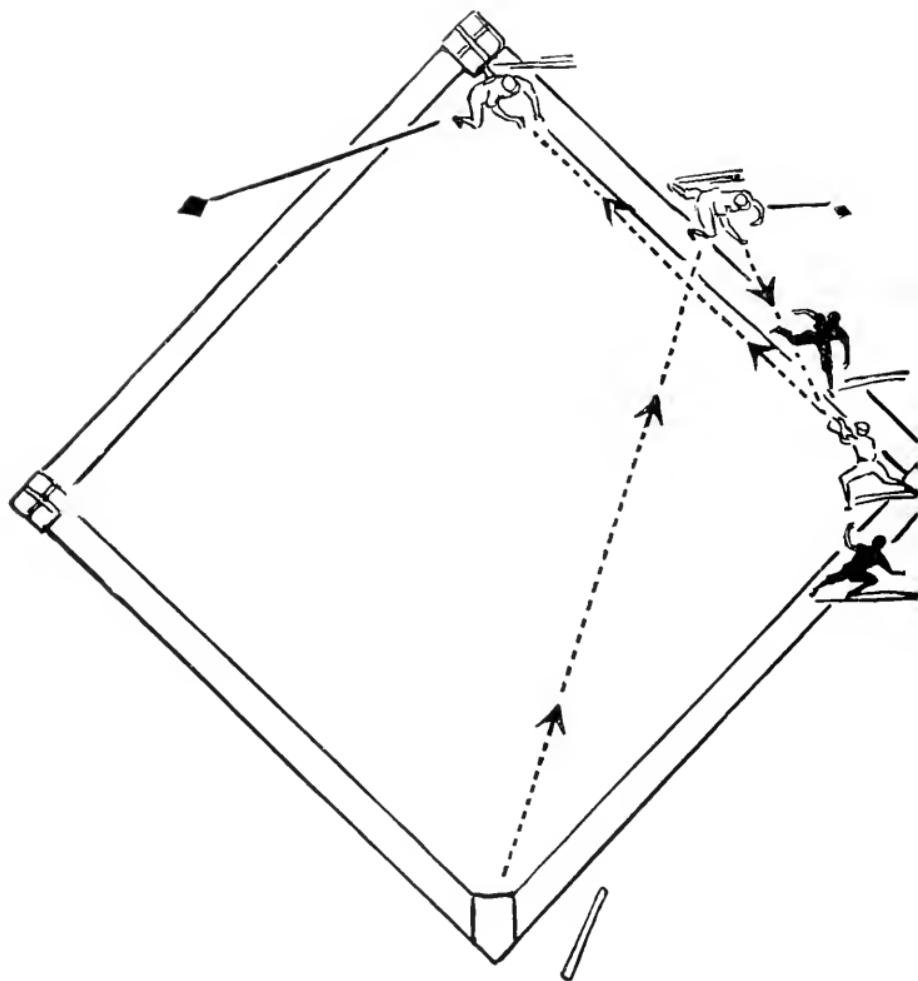
After touching the base, take the foot away from it. Runners come into second at top speed and frequently round the base going full tilt. They do not notice where the baseman has his foot and if the baseman forgets to withdraw his foot from the bag he is liable to a bruise.

## Special Points for the Second Baseman

Think about how plays should be made, but don't do advance thinking to the exclusion of everything else. Once there was a second baseman in one of the major leagues who had it all "figured out in his mind" that he would throw the ball to the shortstop if the next hit came to him, a play which should force the runner who was on first base. The thought was tiptop. The ball was batted to him, but it was a line drive. He caught it and threw it to the shortstop, following out his line of advance thought. The shortstop was covering second base, but the throw was so unexpected, after the fly ball had been caught, that he unconsciously dodged the ball and it rolled to the outfield, the runner on first base making third before the ball was secured.

That play brought forth some groans from the crowd and a rebuke from the manager. "What in the world were you thinking about?" asked the latter. "That was just my trouble," was the reply. "I was doing too much thinking. I had thought it all out that I would make a sure double play if the ball was batted to me and I threw for the double play as if it had been a ground ball. I will not let that happen again."

A second baseman must be ready to act on the instant. The situation is likely to change with every ball that is batted and every throw that is made. So much centers on his position that he must not become confused and he must not permit himself to become slow or let his mind run in one channel constantly.



Double play—second base to first base to shortstop. Ball hit to second baseman on the line; man on first running to second stops to avoid being touched; second baseman runs him back to first, then throws to first baseman, putting out the batter and thus taking the force off the base-runner, who reverses and starts for second. He has to be touched to be put out, which results from the first baseman throwing to the shortstop covering second base.

Try never to make a useless throw. There is nothing more foolish than loose throwing of the ball from fielder to fielder. If you try for a bunt and get the ball, only to note that the batter has reached first base, do not attempt to throw from a bad position out of which the chances are better than even that you will make an error. Do not throw merely for the sake of throwing. That is not a game. It is a wasteful exhibition of skill, or perhaps if you should make a bad blunder, lack of skill.

#### Never hesitate to try a play.

Try for everything. That is the finest play you can make. The player who tries is forgiven much. If you make an error now and then, as the best do, be sure that it does not put you out mentally during the remainder of the game. Other players make errors. Base ball is made up of errors and good plays, in which most players share alike. The good play which follows an error may be the play by which you win the game, and the good play is as likely to take place as the mistake. It is an even proposition.

The most important sign that you have to learn as a beginner is one which may be given by the catcher to try to retire a sleeping base-runner. Don't bother a great deal about signs. The two players on the ball field to whom signs are the most important are the pitcher and the catcher. It is well to know their signs, but if an effort is made to run everything on the ball field by means of signs the beginners will become so hopelessly confused that they will be unable to get anything right. Signs can be overdone. Anyway, they belong more to professional base ball than they do to amateur base ball.



Bancroft of the Giants shows how the ball should be handled with both hands by the shortstop. He is not in favor of the shortstop placing both feet rigidly together because it results in a fixed position from which it is very difficult to shift if the ball takes a false bound.      International Film Service, Photo.

## THE SHORTSTOP

To play shortstop as the newer game of base ball demands is another style of play from that which was expected years ago. Then the shortstop was an infielder, not on a base, who took care of ground balls between second base and third base because there were many more right-handed batters than there were left-handed batters, and the larger share of the ground hits rolled or bounded between second base and third base.

### **Shortstop is often the second baseman.**

Nowadays the shortstop a great deal of the time is as much the second baseman as if he were called the second baseman. Almost all of the suggestions that have been given to beginners about playing second base are just as good for the playing of shortstop. If it were not for old friendship it would not be wrong, and possibly a little more accurate, if we called one of the infielders the right field second baseman or shortstop, and the other the left field second baseman or shortstop. Of course, mistakes might arise by having two second basemen or shortstops in the game which would confuse and mix up scores. Hence we cling to the old way.

The positions are the two most alike on the ball field. They are quite dependent upon each other. Almost all of the plays which have a start around shortstop and second base have something of resemblance. When the second baseman gets a ground hit the shortstop may cover second base for a double play, for example, and

when the shortstop gets a ground hit the second baseman may cover the base for a double play. In general when one of these players is not guarding the base the other is. The catcher throws the ball to catch a base-runner and sometimes the second baseman receives it and sometimes the shortstop.

In the very first days of base ball, and up to the beginning of the '80s, the second baseman did not range so far away from second base as he does now. He clung fairly close to the bag all of the time, because the players of those days took to heart the fact that they were second basemen and must be close to their base every minute. They thought it had to be guarded by almost standing on it. When newer generations began to play base ball the position of second baseman began to increase in importance, and the territory which the second baseman ranged for plays began to expand rapidly. No longer was the second baseman content to remain close to his base constantly. He could do better by moving further away, and when he began to go further toward first base the shortstop began to support him by taking his place at second or playing closer to the bag where he could act in helping out the second baseman. The result is that nowadays there is nothing more clever on a base ball diamond than smooth and easy team work on the part of the second baseman and shortstop.

#### **“Backing up” the third baseman.**

The second baseman today plays fairly well over toward the first baseman to guard the territory between first base and second. The shortstop plays toward the

third baseman to guard the territory between second base and third base. There is not so much backing up needed of the third baseman as there is of the first baseman, because the third baseman during the game does not begin to meet the plays that fall to the lot of the first baseman. Yet the shortstop must always be ready to back up the third baseman. Frequently he plays deep to save the ball if it gets away from the third baseman, and a good shortstop very often prevents hard hits from becoming two-baggers. He may not be able to keep them from being good for one base, but by cleverly blocking the ball he holds the batter to a single base instead of two that he might make.

### **Shortstop should be fastest infielder.**

If anything, the shortstop should be faster, nimbler and quicker than any other infielder. Often he must run almost to the left field foul line to get a hit. If he is very fast on his feet, and if he has been playing right for the batter, he may throw the latter out on a hit which seemed almost as good as safe. The shortstop should be an excellent thrower. Except the throws which he may make to the second baseman, and the occasional throws that he may make to the third baseman, he will have longer and harder throws to make than the second baseman and he must be sure they are straight. Of the ground hits which go to a shortstop during a game, probably three-quarters of them will roll anywhere between second base and third base and quite deep into left field. To get the batter out at first base each of these hits necessitates better throwing than the second baseman may

have to make to retire a batter at first base. Even when the second baseman is playing deep he does not have to throw the ball as far as the shortstop is obliged to throw it from an ordinary fielding play somewhere back of the line between second base and third base. Good line throwing is absolutely necessary for the shortstop. He should also be a good underhand thrower, as he will have a chance to throw underhand when he runs forward with a fine dash and picks up a hard ground hit from the turf of the infield.

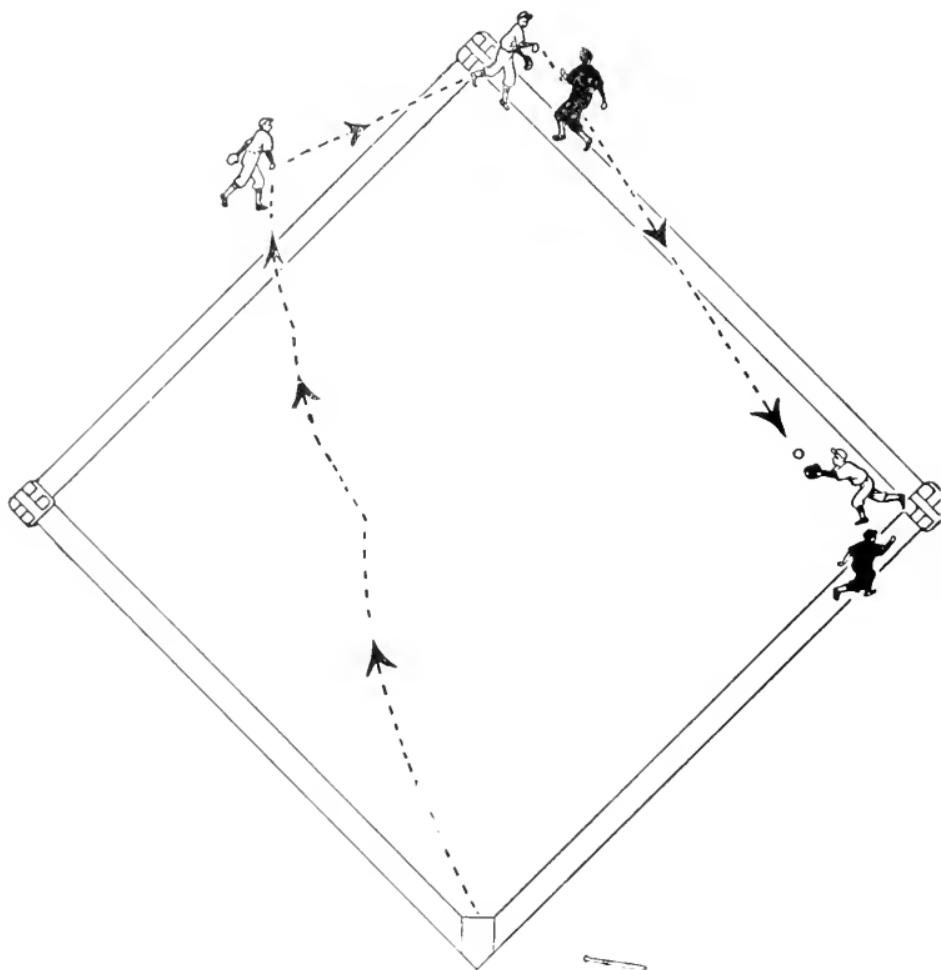
The build of the shortstop follows on a general line that of the second baseman. There are short men who play shortstop splendidly and tall men who play equally as well. A tall man has a little the better of it at shortstop, because of his longer upward reach, if he is loose jointed and can bend as easily and as quickly as the short man. If it takes the tall player a long time to stoop down and get hold of the ball it is that much added handicap. Some tall boys do not bend their knees easily.

#### **Shortstop must assist the pitcher.**

In addition to backing up the third baseman and playing second base some of the time, the shortstop must also be ready to back up the pitcher. There are many awkward little chop hits which either get away from the pitcher, or partially get away from him, that can be handled only by the shortstop. That compels him to be ready to run forward as well as to move backward and to one side. The second baseman usually plays so deep that he cannot support the pitcher as well as shortstop. Observation has proved that more chop hits are batted to

the left field side of the pitcher than to the right field side. Probably some of this is due to the twist on the ball, but more of it is due to the greater number of right-handed batters.

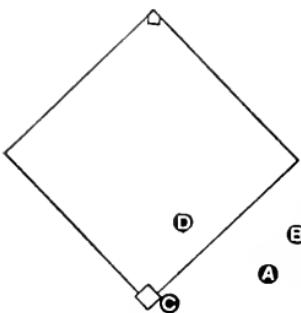
The shortstop should have good sized hands. He should keep them in excellent condition. His fingers should bend easily and he should have a strong grip in the ends of them. Very often he will barely touch the ball, but if his fingers are strong he will get a little hold on it and check its speed so materially that in another instant he will have it securely enough in his grasp to pick it up and throw.



Shortstop to second base to first base. This is one of the simplest forms of a double play in which the shortstop figures. Batter hits grounder to shortstop, who throws to second baseman, the latter relaying it to first baseman **for** the second out.

## Shortstop on the Field

When the game begins the shortstop takes his position to the left field side of second base. It will depend greatly on whether the batter is a right-handed hitter or a left-handed hitter, as to whether he will play a deep short field or play close to the base line between second base and third base.

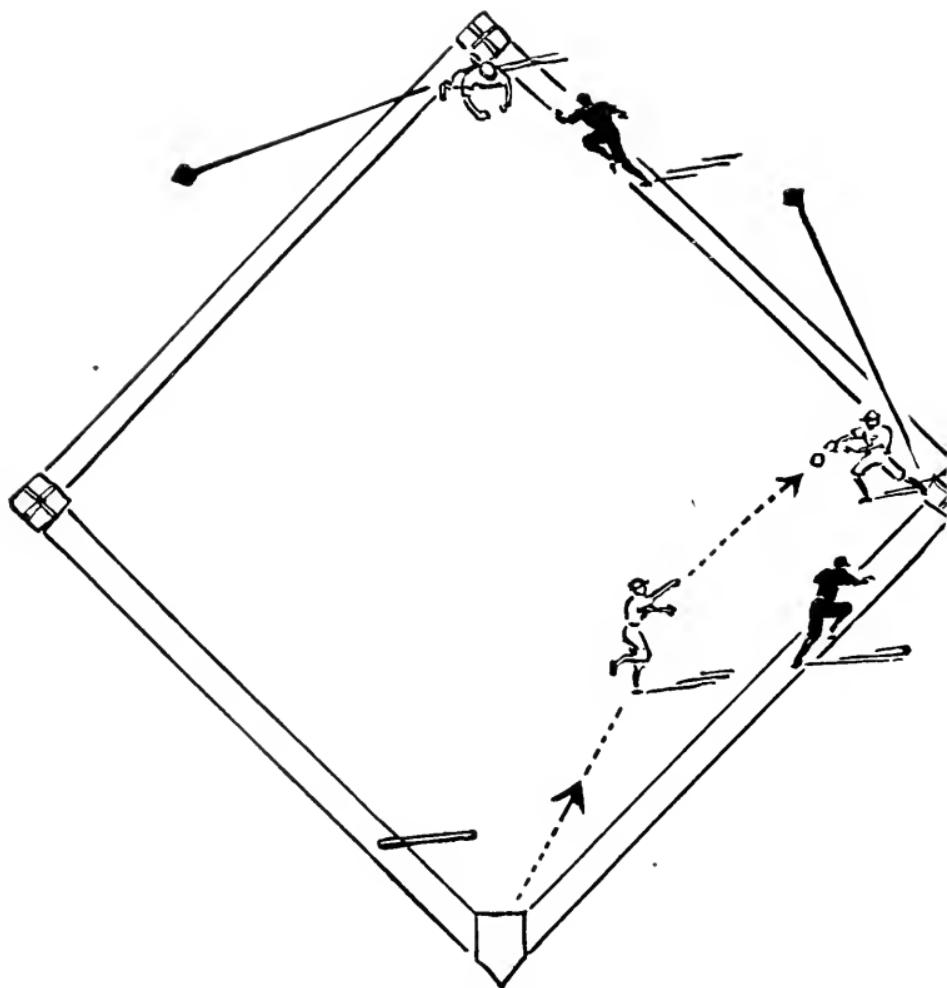


A—Usual position of shortstop. B—Shortstop backing up third baseman. C—Shortstop acting as a second baseman. D—Shortstop supporting the pitcher, and playing "in," with runner on third and less than two out.

If the batter is left-handed the shortstop will stand to the left of second base at a point which is reasonably close to the base, figuring that the batter may hit into center field. If the batter is right-handed and known to meet the ball hard, the shortstop will get behind the base line fifteen feet, perhaps, and play midway between second base and third base. All of the time, no matter what position he may take for the moment, he should be on his

toes, shifting a few inches from one side to the other, and always watching with much attention the position of the batter the moment that the pitcher takes his place on the rubber preparatory to the delivery of the ball. Not all batters tell by their position at the plate where they are likely to hit the ball, but a great many of them do.

If the first batter arrives safely at first base the shortstop must play in quite close on the next batter if he



Sacrifice hit play. First baseman is drawn away from bag to field ball; second baseman covers first and shortstop covers second. Broken line indicates course of ball; continuous lines indicate where shortstop and second baseman left their positions.

notices any inclination on the part of the batter to make a sacrifice. To play a deep field for him would be a waste of effort. The batter may tap toward right field. In that case the second baseman may be called upon to get the ball, and if he does run for it the shortstop will immediately become the second baseman for the moment, and must guard the bag. The throw will be made to him by the regular second baseman.

#### **Varied duties of the shortstop.**

If the batter should bunt toward the pitcher, especially if the second batter happens to be a left-hander, the shortstop will be expected to be on guard at second base, because the second baseman will have been called over toward first base to prevent the batter from chopping the ball safely through that territory. Sometimes a bunt will get away from the pitcher, and then it is the shortstop who rushes in and handles the ball, even if he does not always make the play, because it is a hard play to make sometimes. It is also the duty of the shortstop when no one, or but one, is out not to play too deeply in his field if there is a runner at third base. His manager may call to him to come within the lines of the infield, trusting that the agility of the shortstop will enable him to get the next batted ball and throw the runner out at home plate.

Very rarely the shortstop will play so close to second base that he may be said to be almost upon it. He does so when there is a batter at the plate who is known to be a pronounced center field hitter. There are a few like that, and so very few, that it is not a good risk to play

too close to second base, unless the batter happens to be one of those known to be a regular center field hitter.

If a ground hit is batted exactly over second base at the average force which is put into a ground hit and the second baseman and the shortstop are playing where they normally play, it is almost sure to be a base-hit. That open space is what is called "the base-hit groove." So few chances roll that way, as compared with the many which go to the right or to the left of second base, that the shortstop and the second baseman are willing to take some risk and therefore station themselves closer to second base only when they are convinced that they have a chance to retire the batter. As compared with other fielding plays which are given to these two players to handle, not more than ten per cent of the batted balls go squarely over second base, or within two feet of it, on either side.

If the second baseman runs out to assist in relaying the ball to the infield the shortstop should always cover second base, if there is a runner either on second base or on first base. No one knows what play may happen next and the shortstop must be ready to be the second baseman in any emergency. You will observe that these positions keep filling in and out all of the time. First one and then the other makes the second-base play. Were it not for the good work of the shortstop, the position of second base would be so open that a great many more runs would be scored in ball games than are.

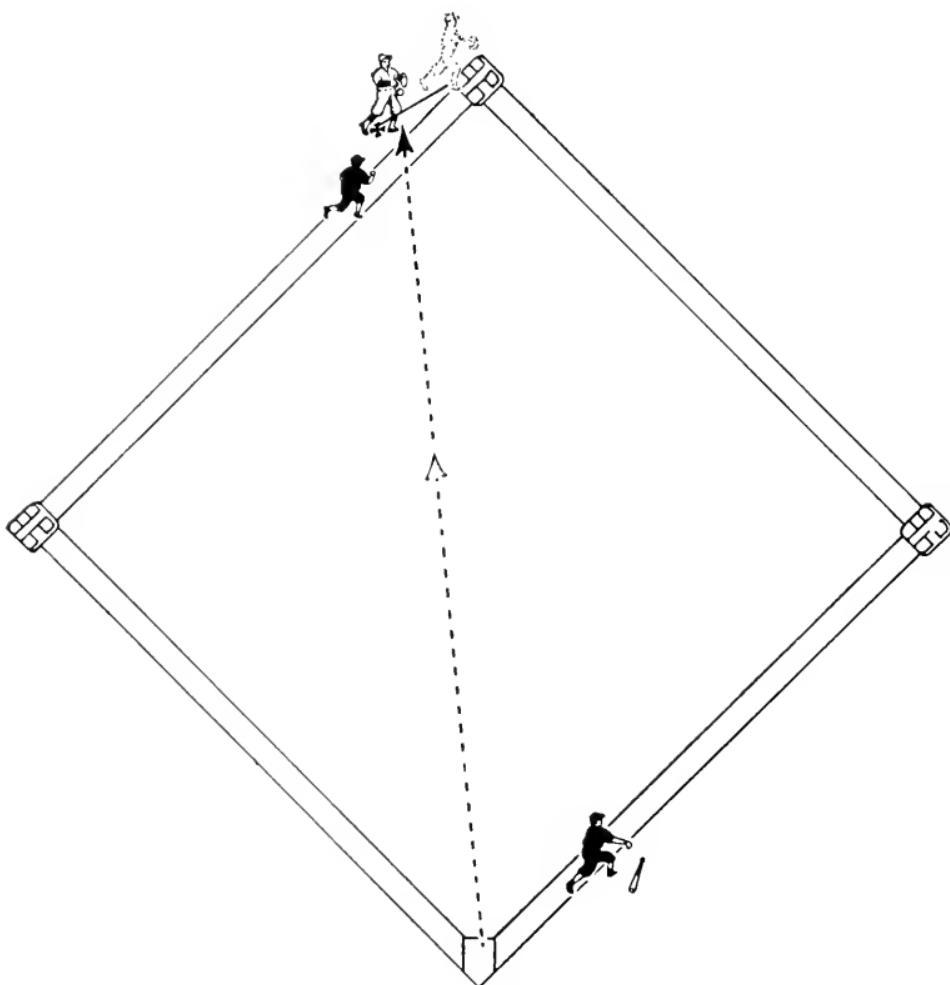
The shortstop will have his share of foul flies to catch. They will be high ones which go over the third baseman's head and which do not go far enough out for the left

fielder to try for them. Frequently on these high foul flies the shortstop can make the best play of any man on the diamond, so it is essential for him to be a good catcher of fly balls as well as a good fielder of ground hits.

He must frequently govern himself by the score and by the batter at the plate. For instance, if there were a man on third base and the batter known to be a pronounced left field hitter—one of those players who raps the ball very hard down the left field line—the shortstop would hardly be justified in playing close to second base. He should shift over toward third base, where he at least would have some chance to get the ball after a hard hit. If he did get it, and there were two out, perhaps he would get the batter at first base and the run would not score. If there were not two out and it was worth while to make a play for the runner at the plate, he might be able to catch him by a perfect throw to the catcher and thus save the game.

### **The rovers of the infield.**

It may always be taken for granted that when there is a runner on first base the batter will do what he can to advance him to the next base, and the shortstop should play accordingly. In fact, he cannot be said to have a fixed position more than the second baseman. If they were not second baseman and shortstop they could well be called the infield rovers, for that is what they are in reality.



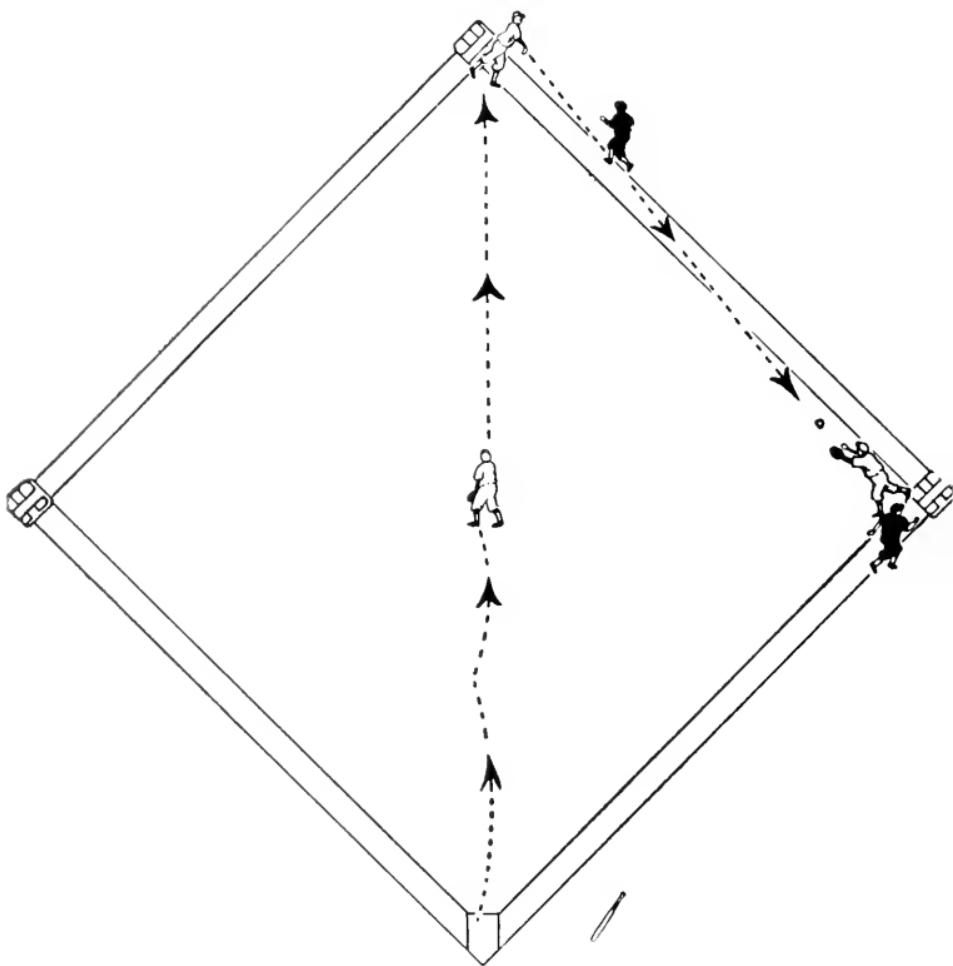
Double play. Shortstop catches line drive and *runs* to second base with ball (dotted figure indicates shortstop touching second base) before runner who was taking a lead off second can return.

## “Backing Up” by the Shortstop

All of the infielders have their share in assisting the plays of one another. The first baseman supports the second baseman, now and then, and not infrequently runs in to help out the catcher at the plate. The second baseman does his part to help the first baseman and the pitcher. The shortstop, however, does more “backing up” than any infielder. He is the principal assistant to the second baseman, helps the third baseman, works with the pitcher, and runs to the aid of the outfielders. Some of the lively men who have played the position of shortstop have been found behind home plate, backing up a throw from the outfield. No one seemed to know how they got there, but they did, and the fact that they did proved how fine they were as ball players.

If a throw is coming to second base from right field, and from such a direction that the ball, should it get away from the second baseman, will go to left field, it is the duty of the shortstop to be behind the second baseman. In a game of a recent world series one of the shortstops forgot to be in position at second base. He was so certain that a fly catch would be made that he did not move away from where he stood. When the ball was thrown to second base there was no one there, and the runner went all the way around the bases and scored. He should not have been able to proceed further than second.

If there is a play in which the third baseman is involved and it is evident that he will need help, the shortstop should think quickly enough to know that he will



Double play. Batter hits ball to pitcher, who whirls around and throws to shortstop covering second base, the ball then being thrown to first baseman in time to beat the batter running to first.

need such assistance and be ready to give it to him, starting to do so when the play begins. Bridwell, who played shortstop for the Giants some years ago, was one of the most proficient of players in lending aid to the third baseman. More than once he performed that rare feat of picking up a grounder which the third baseman had partially stopped. He thought out the possibilities of the play from the moment that he placed himself for the batter whom he figured would rap the ball to left field. That is what the shortstop should always be able to do. Do not think that the shortstop may be more of a mind reader than any other player, unless he has been more generously gifted that way by Nature. That is not the point which is being made. The emphasis which is trying to be placed on this essential of good shortstopping is the necessity for being ready to be at the spot where the play falls, no matter what the play may be.

#### **Freedom of field to the shortstop.**

Remember that the shortstop has more latitude than any one of the three basemen when he is playing at shortstop only. If he is called upon to be the second baseman for the moment, it is the duty of the second baseman to become the acting shortstop on one side, the third baseman acting on the other. The one important fact is that the shortstop shall make the most of the opportunities which are offered to him. When he is not taking immediate care of some base-runner, to see that the latter does not advance further along the bases than can be prevented, he can roam to all parts of the infield and the short outfield, where his services will

prove to be of the most value when the ball is in play after it has been batted or when it is being played against a runner and not against the batter at first base.

Napoleon Lajoie tried playing shortstop after playing second base. He frankly admitted that the shortstop had the more difficult position. "There is more ground to cover," he said, when referring to the comparison between the positions. More ground to cover naturally meant more chances and more difficult chances. Not the least of the differences between the positions was the necessity of being able to throw further and with as much accuracy as throwing from second base. It is the player with the good throwing arm who will outstrip any other candidate for the position of shortstop if all other things are equal.

#### **A very difficult throw to make.**

The long throw from the deep infield, back of third base and a little to its right, is one of the hardest of all throws to make on the ball field. Only the best of the shortstops are able to make it. If there is a beginner who can make that throw and who can play the infield with the speed, the spryness, the agility, the ever-ready "thinking out" of the plays which are crowding upon him, let him continue to play shortstop, because he will not only play the kind of ball which will be enjoyed by himself, but it will be enjoyed by all who are to have the pleasure of looking at it.

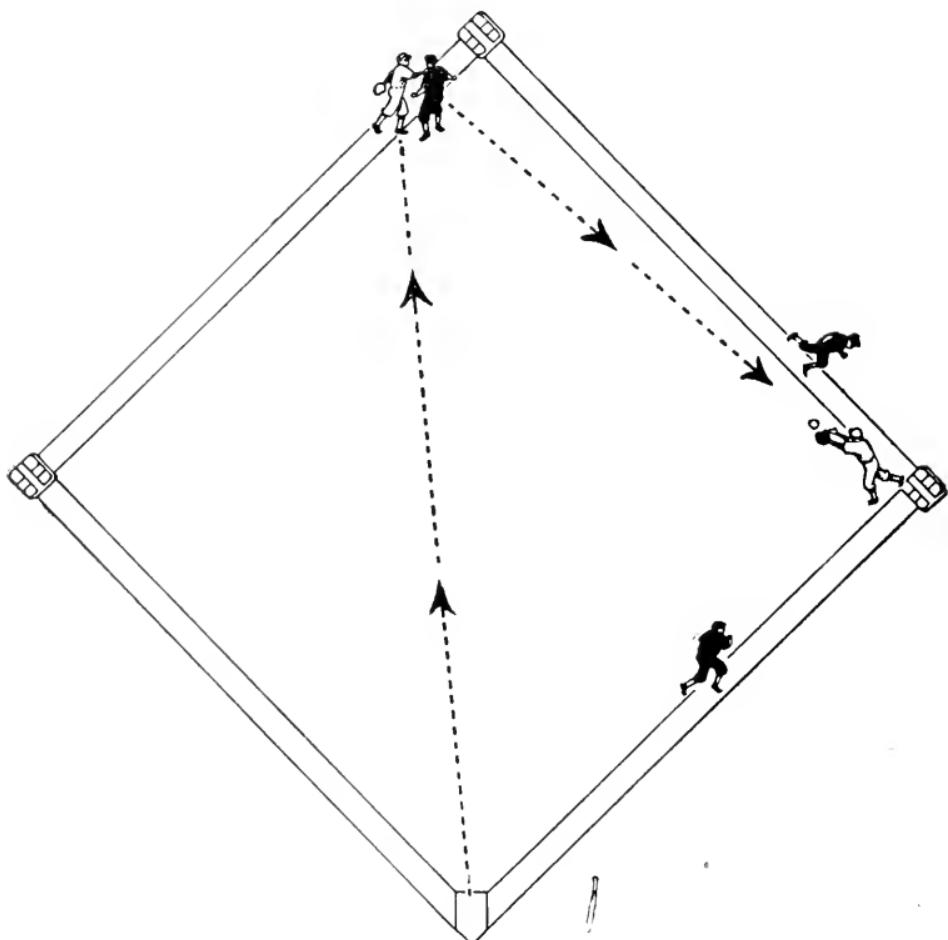
The grounders which are taken by the shortstop with one hand when on the full run are thrilling to the spectators, and the satisfaction of making such plays is unlim-

ited to the shortstop. Remember, in making them, that it will almost always be necessary to make the throw while running at full speed and that it is a play which is difficult of execution but most satisfactory to the player when it goes through well. The ball has a tendency to raise when thrown by a runner in motion and that should be taken into consideration, or a wild throw will put the ball far beyond the baseman and the hit be good for two or three bases instead of one.

#### **Slow bounders fielded on the run.**

It is the rule that almost all slow bounders must be taken on the run. If the shortstop waits for the ball to come to him it will arrive so late that it will be impossible to put the runner out. On hits of this description the underhand throw comes in at its best, and the fielder who can make a good underhand throw will be the fielder who will be able to get the runner at first base.

It is the quick pickup and throw that are part of the game for the shortstop, and it is the quick pickup and ready throw which are as much needed in backing up as they are in making one of the first plays against a runner on the bases. Part of the reason for making the shortstop independent, and not being held alone responsible for a base, is the desire to give him all the latitude possible to play his position and play it well.

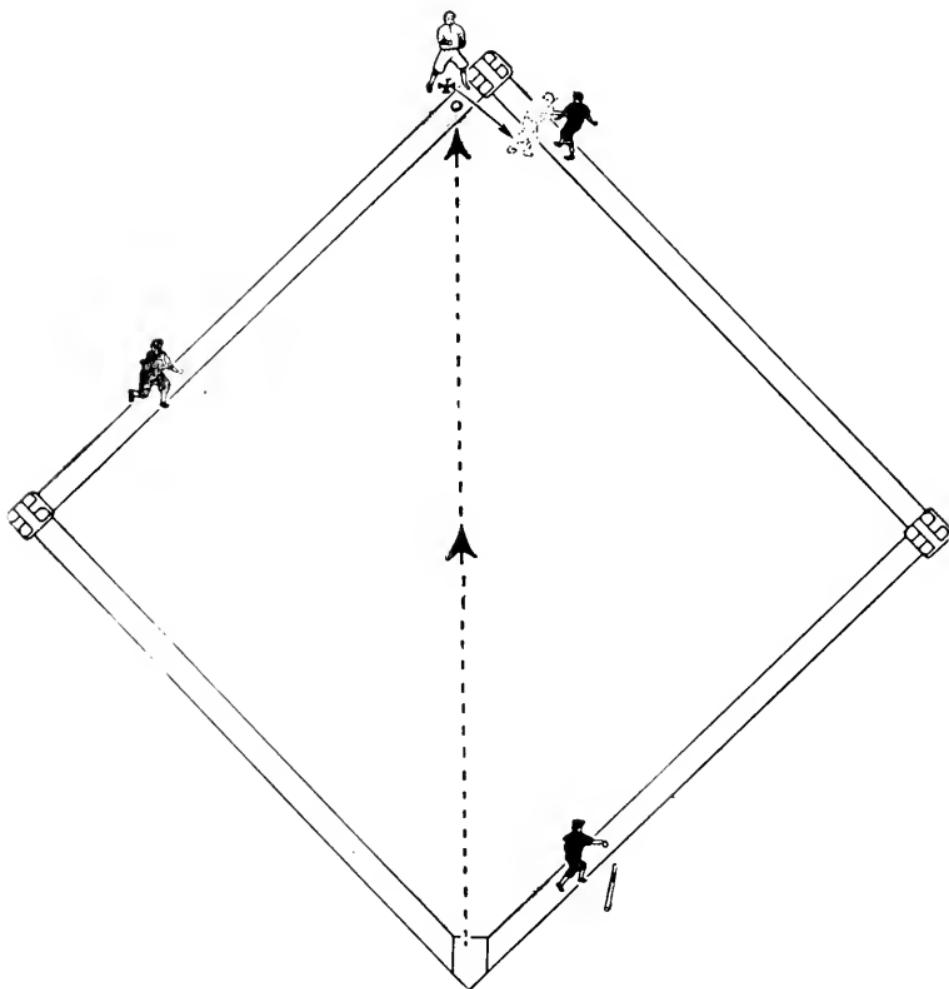


#### TRIPLE PLAY.

Batter hits line drive to shortstop—runners on first and second—who touches runner off second and throws out runner from first before he can get back.

## General Observations on the Shortstop

Of all the comment for the benefit of boys and beginners, there has been none given by an experienced shortstop which is better than that of Al Bridwell, who played with Boston and New York in the National League. He looks at the problem from the boys' standpoint. In discussing playing shortstop, he said: "In my observation it has yet to fail that when a score of boys are gathered for a base ball game the spryest and most active of the group will wish to play shortstop if sides are chosen. I can recall that when I played ball as a boy I was one of the youngsters who essayed to play shortstop, because I had the reputation of moving rapidly over the ground and there were few of my acquaintances who were fleet of foot and adroit who had not a similar inclination. As I remember it, the boy who could play tag and seldom be touched, and the boy who could take part in prisoner's base and elude most of the boys who played against him, usually, for some reason or another, drifted into the position of shortstop when it came to a ball game. Boys as they become older learn that this seemingly natural selection of youth follows when the nines of mature years are placed on the field. The agile and alert player becomes a shortstop as naturally as the tall and cool boy with a knack of catching thrown balls perfectly gravitates to the position of first base. For that reason I wish to lend my encouragement to the short and sturdy chaps who move with the rapidity of well-trained and developed muscles for the position of shortstop. Nine



#### TRIPLE PLAY.

This is a most unusual feat. A line drive is hit to the shortstop, who touches second base before the runner who had started for third can get back to second, and then touches the runner from first base before he can return to latter.

times out of ten, if the impulse of base ball takes them to that position on the diamond, they will succeed. Any number of instances can be cited to prove this. At the present time we always can find excellent shortstops among the major league players who are men of lesser stature than those at some other positions of the field. For that reason it is safe to recommend to the beginner who is a little below the average height to play shortstop if he feels it in him to be a shortstop.

### **Changes made by modern batting.**

"Modern batting has changed the work of the third baseman and the pitcher, because it has given both of them difficult bunt hits to handle. The same style of hits has affected the first baseman, although not to a like extent, because the first baseman, except in the greatest of emergencies, must still be considered the guardian of the base at which he is stationed. Modern batting has not had a like effect on the fielding of the shortstop. Hits to his field vary little from what they were years ago. If there is any change of note it is more in the batters than in the kind of hits which they make. More left-handed batters and more batters of great sprinting ability make it incumbent on the shortstop to handle the ball with accuracy and extreme rapidity. Some of the batters of the professional leagues are adept in hitting the ball slowly at an extreme angle between third and shortstop, where it is almost out of the question for the third baseman to handle the ball and where the only chance which the shortstop has is to be fully as lively as the batter and alert enough to divine his intention."



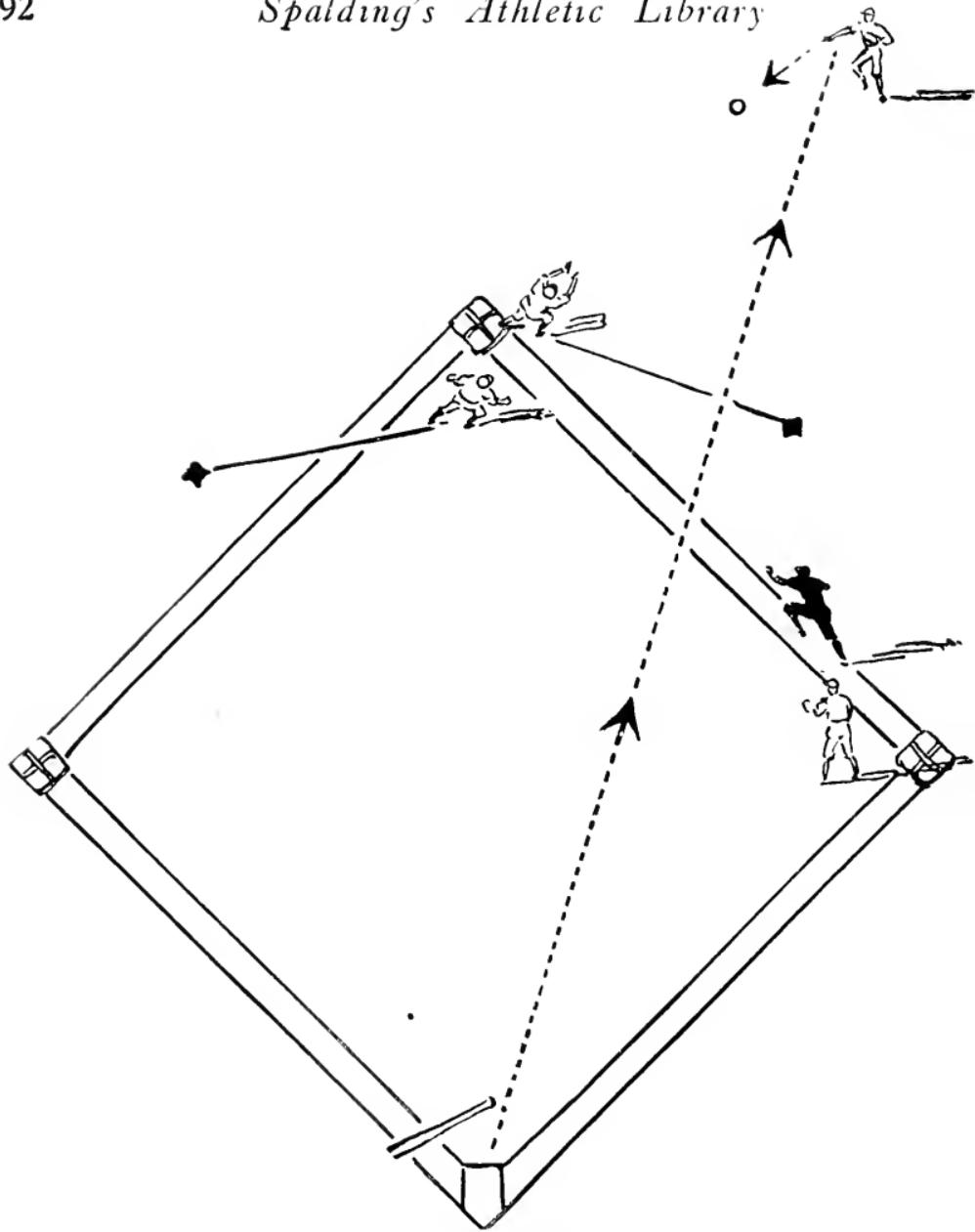
If a double play is in sight and the throw looks as if it will be a little wide, it is always good policy for the baseman to hook his foot into the bag. It helps to steady him, in addition to making the put-out complete if it is possible to reach the ball. Of course, if the ball goes too wide the chances of a put-out are so remote that "hooking the bag" is useless. (McKechnie, Pittsburgh.)

## THE THIRD BASEMAN

When batters not only learned to bunt the ball, but began to bunt it freely, the work of the third baseman doubled at a fast pace. This did not all happen over night, yet it happened very suddenly. Usually in a sport it takes a long time for such things to work out. In most of our games we do not like to hurry to make changes. Bunting by batters did not give the third baseman very much time to think. They had to be ready to meet a new play of which the oldtime third basemen knew practically nothing.

Batters did bunt now and then for some years, but not with any regular system. Two or three progressive managers saw the value of the bunt. One of them was Charles A. Comiskey. Has any one ever heard that he discouraged bunting on the part of Latham, who played third base for the St. Louis Browns when they were champions? Another man who was a fellow manager with Comiskey, Tom Loftus, and who played ball when Comiskey played, favored bunting. He had a hard time trying to convert some base ball men to it, but he was finally successful with one of its most stubborn opponents.

The Western managers were earlier advocates of bunting, take them together, to a greater extent than the managers of the East. The latter were slow to take the "baby tap" up, as they called the bunt then. There were some of them who used their best efforts to have bunting prevented because they thought it would destroy the use-



Safe hit to right field. Second baseman leaves his fielding position to cover second base, while shortstop runs over to back up second baseman on throw-in from right fielder.

fulness of their star third basemen and ruin batting. Instead of encouraging the basemen to try to play better, they were protecting them.

The topic of bunting has been referred to because it has made the third baseman one of the most important defensive players on the ball field. Not only must he be observant of runners who are bound for his base, but he must play for batters on the infield proper and back of it. That is not an easy task. He must specially be able to run forward and pick up a ball while in motion. All infielders have that to do sometimes, but the third baseman has to do it repeatedly.

#### **Bunting has given third baseman variety.**

Before there was much bunting the third baseman seldom or never played closer to the batter than the base line between second and third bases. A great deal of the time he played as far behind third base as the first baseman plays behind first base. Sometimes he plays that far back now and sometimes he plays many feet in advance of the base line. He must be as ready to try to pick up a bunt hit along the left field foul line, and only a few feet from home plate, as he must be to stop a hot grounder ten feet behind the base. That is why third base has become a position that is specially hard to fill. More teams in the big leagues fail to win pennants for lack of third basemen than fail to win them for lack of first basemen. A good third baseman is recognized as quickly by the novice as by the expert, because the good third baseman is sure to be better than an average player.

A third baseman may be a little short in stature, of medium height or tall. There are good third basemen

of all heights, but the very best third basemen, not always the most spectacular fielders—if they are spectacular fielders so much the better—are tall players. If they are equal to their fellow players in picking up the ball and throwing it, and are equal in some of the other things which go with good base ball, they will be just a little better than their fellow players if they are a few inches taller. A good reach is every bit as desirable at third base as it is at first base.

### Tall men are good third basemen.

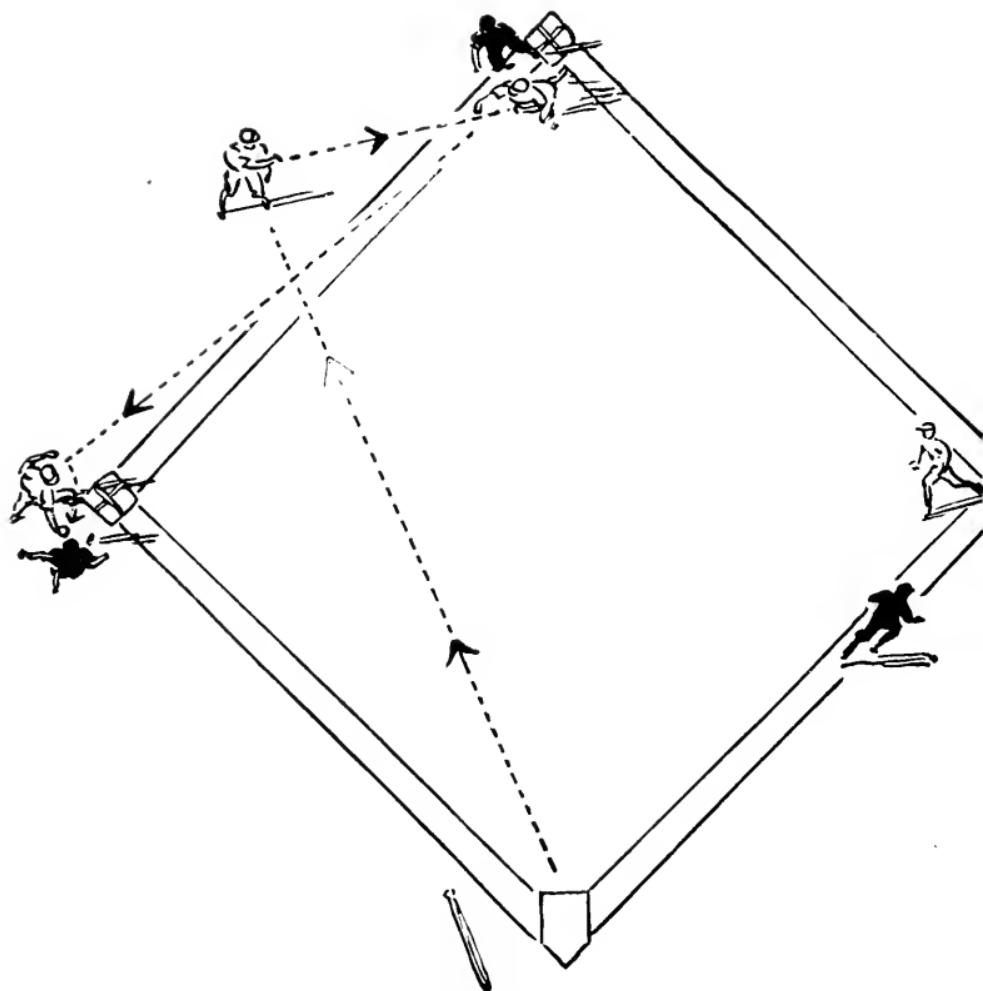
The tall third baseman will get more line drives over his head, and if his arms are long in proportion to his body he will reach out and get more ground hits and more line hits. Offhand there were three tall third basemen who were the best trio that ever played the position. They were Jerry Denny of Indianapolis, when the latter city was in the National League; William Bradley of Cleveland, and Arthur Devlin of the Giants. Each one of the three had an advantage over the shorter ball player who tried to play at third.

There have been many star third basemen in addition to those three, but there was not one of the three mentioned but could get hits which the shorter third baseman could not reach, and that is one of the reasons why these tall men were better. There are some who think that Jimmy Collins of Boston was the best third baseman in history. He was a medium sized man. In his prime and with all his wonderful expertness, for he was a grand ball player, there were hits over his head which he could not reach but which could have been reached by a taller player.

The third baseman has to play his position like a locomotive which is backing up and down a railroad track switching cars. One moment he will be as far out as he can get. The next he will be almost on top of home plate and the third will be around his own base, either watching a runner or preparing to put one out. Like the locomotive, too, the third baseman remains on a single track. He does not roam very far to one side; that is, he does not play far over toward the shortstop except now and then. There are times when it is his duty to get hits which are almost if not quite in the shortstop's territory, but the demands in a narrow space, which runs from home plate to third base, are so many and so exacting that the third baseman really has all that one player can attend to if he takes care of that limited strip of ground. It is filled with attempted bunts and ground hits that go flying toward the outfield at the speed of a mile a minute.

He cannot brace himself for the ball. The old-fashioned third baseman could do so. The latter stepped behind the line, perhaps ten feet, and "dug in," that is, braced himself on the ground, waiting for the hot grounders which he felt sure right-handed batsmen would send his way. The third baseman of these days must be on his toes.

It is also important that the third baseman be a long and accurate thrower and a good underhand thrower. The third baseman should be a better thrower than the catcher, if anything. Many of his throws are fully as long as those which have to be made by the catcher. Some are longer. The better that he can throw underhand, the better he will play third base.

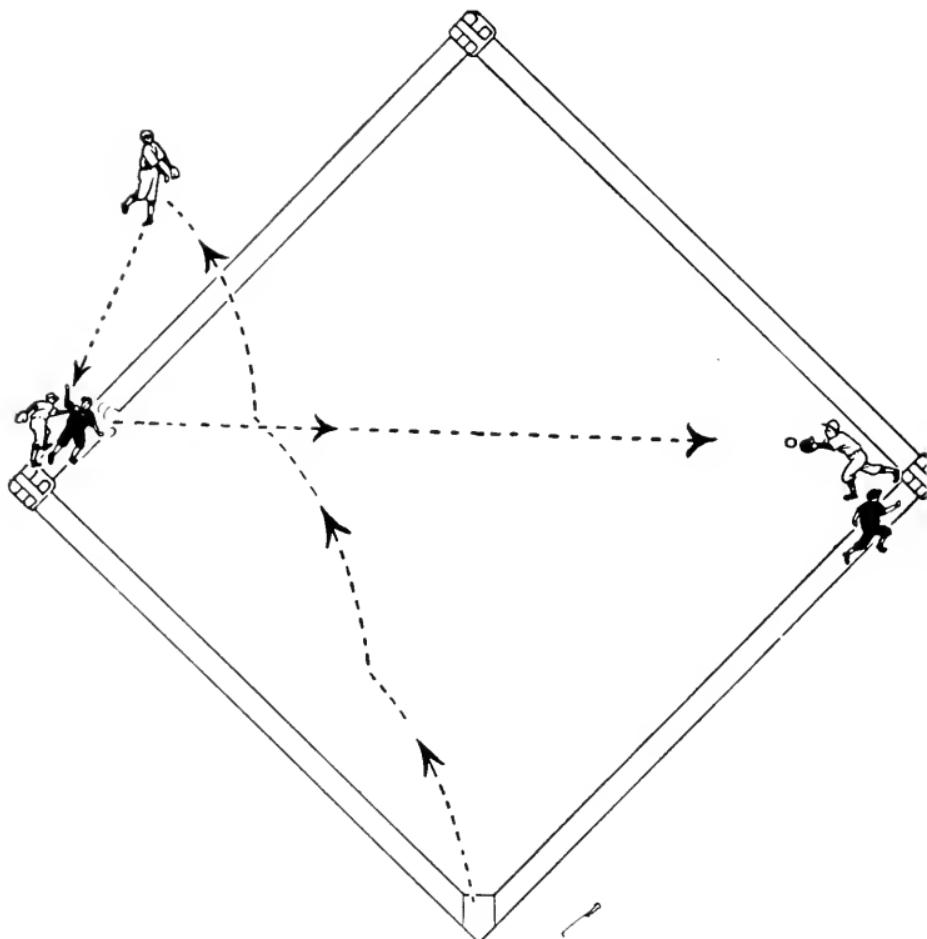


Catching a runner overrunning third base. The play being too slow to retire runner at second, the second baseman by quick throw to third can often catch base-runner who has overrun third base.

The third baseman will have some plays in company with the fielder at second base, whether it be the second baseman or the shortstop. He will not have much in common with the shortstop, as a fielder, except to keep out of the shortstop's way when the latter is after the ball. Between the catcher and the third baseman there are many plays concerning both. Although there are times when the third baseman will not try to keep the runner hugging the base, there are others when he will, and he must always be ready to assist in running a base-runner down between third base and home.

Like the first baseman, the third baseman should be a good judge of high, twisting flies. The third baseman will get more foul flies the season through in base ball than the first baseman. This applies as well to amateur games as to professional games. There are more right-hand batters and almost all of them foul the ball frequently. Many of these high fouls are very difficult to judge, as the ball takes a great deal of twist from the bat. Some are harder to judge than others, because the ball, as soon as it goes above the stand, is carried in freakish circles by the wind.

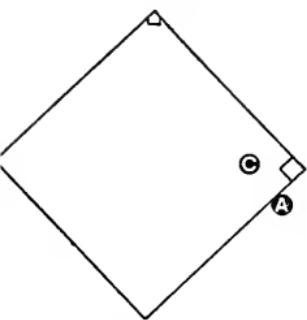
It also falls to the lot of the third baseman to go back into the field behind him to get certain high flies. There are many which are not within the reach of the left fielder and which it is out of the question for the shortstop to get. These are supposed to be taken care of by the third baseman.



This is a double play that is not of frequent occurrence. The shortstop, playing deep, with the runner on second base taking a good lead, throws the ball to third baseman, who touches the runner, thus cutting off what is approaching a run, and the third baseman throws to first base in time to get the batter out.

## Third Baseman on the Field

At the very beginning of the game the third baseman will be placed in a quandary as to whether he would better play the batter for a bunt or for a hard drive. If it is a game between teams of boys, perhaps we would better take it for granted that the chances are more in favor of a reasonably hard hit than an attempt to bunt. Some of the boys do bunt, but it is the exception rather than the rule when they do, as they lack sufficient skill.



A—Customary position for third baseman. B—Playing a "deep third." C—Playing inside for a bunt or a short hit.

The best place that the third baseman can take is about ten feet on fair ground from third base and a few feet behind the base line. At this point he will command a large portion of the territory into which the batter is likely to rap the ball. A grounder of the ordinary

If the batter is fortunate and hits hard right along the third base line he will probably hit safely as well. Some risk must be taken, and if the batter hits that well he is entitled to a safe hit.

It is a good position from which to run in on the ball if the hit should lack force and roll slowly over the grass or sand. When a batter is known to be a pronounced left field hitter, one of the kind who raps the ball rather close to the foul line, and hits it with such force that it is difficult to handle, even if the fielder is in line for it,

it is better to field a little deeper and swing a little closer toward the foul line. The shortstop will protect the territory left vacant by playing more toward the left field foul line himself.

### Running in for sacrifice hits.

If there is a runner on third base and it is expected that the batter will try to advance him by a bunt or a slow grounder toward third, the third baseman should play at least three or four feet in front of the base line and close to the base and the foul line. Every effort is made by batters to bunt as closely to the foul line as possible, because the nearer the ball rolls to the very edge of the infield the more difficult it is to handle. It brings the third baseman in with a hard run. Then he must stoop down, get hold of the ball the best way that he can and follow with a long throw to first base to retire the batter. All told, it is a complex and difficult play, and the third baseman who makes it well nine times out of ten is a fielder worthy to belong to a championship team.

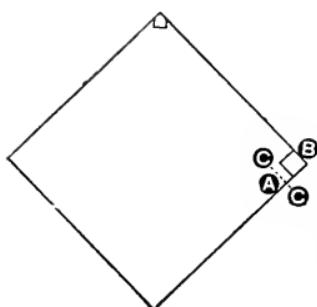
When there is a runner on third base the baseman plays to keep him as close to the base as possible. In that respect his work is something like that of the first baseman. As there is less liability to steal home, the third baseman will not infrequently play for the batter rather than attempt to hold the runner pinned to the base. The catcher faces the runner at third base and can threaten him after the ball is pitched, and it is much more important that the batter be put out of the way, if it is possible to get him out, than it is that the runner shall be held to the base while the batter is given a free field.

Now and then there is a force play at third base in which the runner is retired when the baseman touches the bag with his foot, but there are no plays which require the third baseman to have the same control of his feet as the first baseman must have if he plays his base well. The put-outs which are made by the third basemen are, with few exceptions, put-outs which are the result of runners being touched out. The third baseman for that reason should, like the second baseman, cultivate touching runners handily.

#### **Touching runners a hard task.**

The hardest plays which fall to the lot of a third baseman in touching out runners are those in which a runner is trying to make third on a long distance hit. Almost invariably the last base, which may be the third base, is attempted by a slide. It is not a slide of ease, but a hard, desperate slide in which the runner, if he is a good base-runner, tries to hook his foot into the bag and to throw his body to one side.

On most of these plays the ball goes to the third baseman at angles which are difficult to handle. Most of the time it goes on the bound. The baseman must not only watch the runner to keep his location in mind but he must also be sure of the ball. If he takes his eyes from the ball when it is nearing him he will be pretty sure to lose track of it altogether. If the runner's position is lost it will be that much harder for the baseman to touch him out. In any event, the baseman has the task of a very severe play to make. The risk of blocking the runner is bad policy, because a runner goes into third base with great force as a rule.



A — Best position from which to touch a runner trying for third base. B — poor the baseman will have to follow to try for a runner. C — low the ball regardless of the runner, and when that happens there is a better chance for the runner to make the base. Blocking runner at third, a dangerous experiment.

The proper position to play for a runner is to be a little away from the base line and on the infield side, which is the side toward home plate. If the fielder will throw the ball to that point the baseman can stoop over and touch the runner as he slides by him, if it is possible to

#### **When third baseman does not "play in."**

When there is a runner on second base and one on first base and the batter shows an intention to sacrifice or bunt the ball, it is not good policy for the third baseman to play in if the first baseman and pitcher have signified that they will take care of the sacrifice providing the ball comes in territory which they can guard. If the first baseman picks up the ball he will throw it to third base for the force play, and the third baseman should be sure that he is on the base, playing it in that case as if it were first base. It will not be necessary to touch the runner and there will be a chance of making a double

play at first base. As a rule, there is more time to make the double play at first base than at second, because the runner at first base will have a good start when the ball is batted. If he is a slow runner it is the better play to try to get him at second base, because it is always the best base ball to retire the runner who is nearest home.

Be careful about getting too far into the territory of the shortstop. To try to get any ground hit which seems to be within reach is commendable, but there are times when the shortstop should be permitted to take care of the ball and the third baseman should keep away from it, even if he can get his hands on it. If given to the shortstop to handle he can field the ball from a perfectly normal and natural position, but if the third baseman be allowed to try to handle it he may make a hard chance out of an easy one.



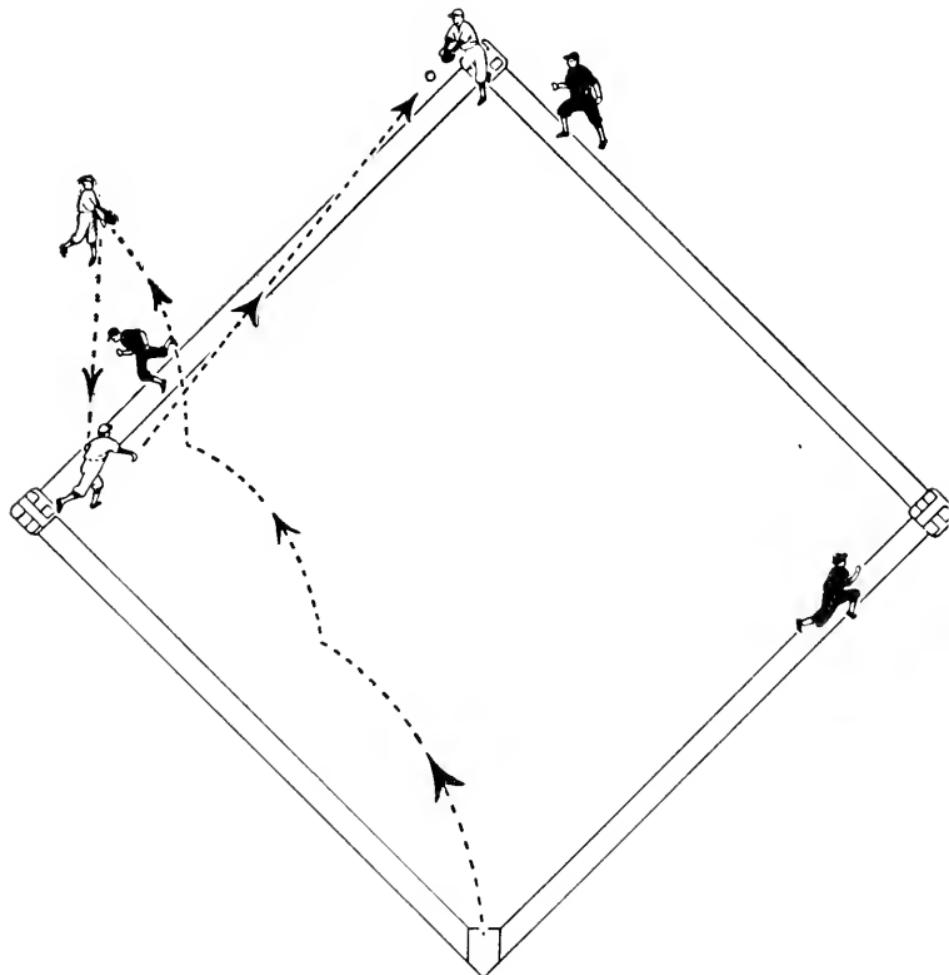
Correct way to stand at third base when the catcher is trying to catch a base-runner napping. After the runner has once touched the base and left it he must return to the base at his own risk, except the rules provide otherwise. (J. Johnston, Brooklyn.)

## Third Baseman Playing for the Batter

There is a constant battle of wits going on between the third baseman and the batter, even more so than between the batter and any other player of the infield. The second baseman plays so far back that he can gauge almost any ground hit, the shortstop can place himself without regard to a base, and even the first baseman who has his troubles with the batter does not have so many difficulties as the third baseman. The latter handles the bulk of the work that has to do with advancing base-runners by means of the sacrifice, and that is why his position is so vexing.

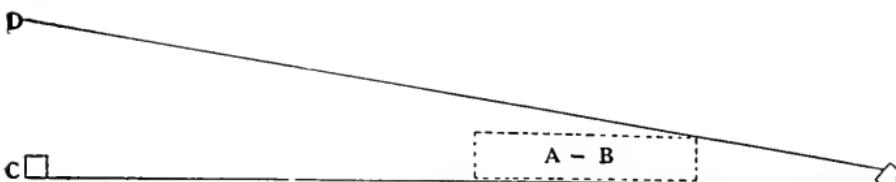
If the batter can draw the third baseman inside the base line and well toward home plate, and he happens to be a good batter, nothing gives him more delight than to tap the ball over the third baseman's head or cut it to one side on the ground, where the chances are all in favor of the ball. How can the third baseman prevent that? He cannot always. It is his guess against that of the batter, and if the latter has outwitted him the penalty will be against the team that is playing on the defensive.

If the batter who intends to sacrifice can make the third baseman believe that he means to bat the ball out, he, too, is jubilant for the moment, and happier if he succeeds in cleverly bunting the ball when the third baseman is out of position to field it. With other duties that are facing him, the third baseman must keep the batter steadily under supervision, and especially when there are runners on the bases.



This is one of the most frequent of double plays when the conditions described exist—runners on first and second. Play is from shortstop to third baseman to second baseman, batter, of course, being safe (if only one out).

Playing for batted balls with one hand is never encouraged except for the third baseman. There are some hits which the third baseman has little or no chance to handle if he does not try for them with one hand. A bunt close to the foul line and not far from home plate, if not played with one hand will be a safe hit almost invariably. Its possibility of being safe increases in proportion with the speed of the batter. If a fast runner bunt the ball to the left field foul line at a time when the logical man to try to get the ball is the third baseman, the best hope for



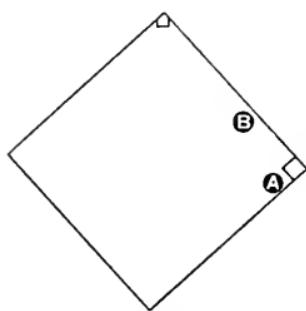
Hits within area of dotted line, A-B, are sometimes best played with one hand. Third baseman should be on the lookout for hits in the territory C-D, when batsman is trying to advance runner.

the third baseman to retire the batter is to race forward, scoop the ball with one hand, if he can, and throw underhand to first base. If he tries to field the ball with both hands he loses just half the turn of his body, which would have been saved had he been able to pick up the ball from the ground and throw it with one motion. It is such plays as these which make the difference between ordinary base ball and championship base ball. They also show the difference between winning base ball and losing base ball, even when the score is not close.

Some left-handed batters place the ball fairly well in left field, but there are few of them who can do so without betraying their intention. They cannot take a full swing and hit to left field except by accident. If the

third baseman will note the position of the batter at the plate he can determine very often whether the possible intent is to bat the ball to left field. The left-handed batter indicates his left field intentions by standing with his arms extended from his body instead of having them hanging low and naturally, with the hands resting against his belt. The right-handed batter, who takes a free swing at the ball and pulls his bat well around, is a sure left field hitter nine times out of ten, and if the third baseman notes that a batter on his first time at the plate swings so hard that he turns his feet and body away from home plate he should play him for a pronounced left field hitter.

It is better always to try to get the ball by running in for it than to wait for it to bound back of the base line. If a fielder is sure of himself it is best to play for the ball on the early bounds instead of on the late bounds. The quicker that a ball is recovered by the third baseman the better it is for him, as the throw is shorter.



A—Correct position to play when "squeeze" sign has been discovered by team in field. If third baseman advances to B for bunt hit catcher will be unable to throw to him.

When there is a runner on third base and it is probable that the squeeze play will be tried, the third baseman should not permit himself to be drawn in. If he does and the runner attempts to return to third base he is likely to regain it in safety, as there will be no one guarding it.

It occasionally happens in boys' games that the batter and runner undertake the "squeeze" play. Usu-

ally the runner, when the boys try it, is so anxious to get home that he jeopardizes the play by running so far down the line that he has no chance to make his way back to third base if the catcher and pitcher are aware of what is going on, and play accordingly. The squeeze play is a doubtful experiment, except with players who have had much experience. Now and then it is successful and now and then it does a great deal of good to a team which when it does win is accustomed to win by a small score. The championship organizations find less occasion to resort to it because they depend upon a larger number of runs than their rivals and try to make their runs by straight out batting and good base-running.

#### **Pitcher and third baseman must “team up.”**

In playing for the batter, be sure that there is a fine understanding with the pitcher in case the ball is bunted. In certain emergencies the pitcher should cover the ground hit and the third baseman should be sure that he intends to do so. There is nothing more distressing than to see no one playing for the ball.

When the ball is bunted very close to the foul line and there is a runner on base who will be benefited by a sacrifice, don't pick it up, but give it a chance to roll foul. Be sure to do this when it is quite certain that the batter will beat the ball to first base if you should pick it up and throw it. A foul and a strike on the batter are much better than two players on the bases. Sometimes the ball will fool you and stop on fair territory, but it is the luck of the game, and the chance is worth taking.



Catching a low throw and playing the base at the same time. Notice how the ball is caught by the gloved hand with the ungloved hand ready to be shut upon it, like a trap door. Also notice that the foot is jammed tight against the base. If a force play, the runner would be out if the ball arrived ahead of him. With the foot on the base the third baseman knows its exact location and guesses correspondingly where to reach for the runner. (McKechnie, Pittsburgh.)

## Third Baseman Playing for the Runner

Third base is not stolen as often as some managers think it should be. Many and many is the argument which takes place over this play in major league base ball. Some managers are agreed that the base should be stolen almost as often as second base, and others believe that it is risking too much to try too many steals of third when a batter is half way advanced for a run with every possibility of being able to score on a hard base-hit. Third base might be stolen more if the runners would study the situation better than they do. Most of them in major league clubs know that some managers are inclined to scoff at stealing third base and never make the effort, because they do not like the reprimand which is too likely to follow if they are unsuccessful.

If there is a clever runner at bat and as good a runner on second base, the third baseman is puzzled sometimes. If he plays too close to the plate, expecting a bunt, and the runner at second makes a dash for third, a smart batter will not make any effort to hit the ball, feeling that the runner has third base in safety, for the third baseman is too far in to be dangerous. The catcher cannot throw to him. If the third baseman plays back and the runner starts from second base for third, the batter, if he is in touch with the runner, will probably bunt the ball and the team in the field will be caught with no defense, while the runner goes to third base without liability to be put out and the batter very likely makes a base-hit.

Or it may happen that the third baseman, as he closes in on the batter, will find the ball going past him at a

fast clip, while the runner from second not only makes third in safety but scores on the play. The batter, taking advantage of the runner's lead from second base, and knowing the third baseman expected a bunt, will hit the ball hard toward left field. There are batters who can do that sort of thing.

#### Plan to trap the base-runner.

If a third baseman is sure that the runner and the batter are going to help one another out, the best thing that he can do is to try to communicate his information to the pitcher and get the latter to throw the ball wide to the catcher. Then the latter will have a chance to make a quick return to the third baseman and the runner from second will be retired, because he had no help from his fellow member. As a rule, the third baseman will have much the worse part of this play, because it is so difficult to try to read the minds of two opposing players, or to guess their intentions.

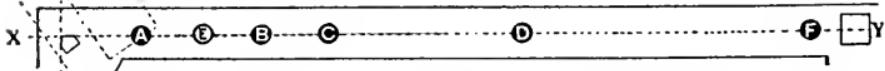
If possible, try to play a thrown ball at third base so that the runner will be in front of you. If he is a clever runner he will try to get behind you so that it will be difficult for you to put him out, but you try to keep behind him. You can watch him better when he is in front of you and can force him to run close to the line. If he gets behind the third baseman, when he slides he will throw his body far out of the way of the base, trying either to hook it with one of his feet or with a body-slide cling to the base with one hand, while feet, legs and chest go far across the foul line and out of the reach of the third baseman.

It is no better policy to try to block runners at third base than it is at any of the other bases. The consequences to the baseman are likely to be followed with unpleasant results. If a runner is trying for extra bases he will take an extra long slide, sometimes, and if the baseman blocks the base he is bound to come into contact with the feet of the runner. More than that, remember that it is against the rules of base ball to block a base without the ball in your possession. In time the bad practise of blocking base-runners may be removed from base ball like some other plays which have proved to be objectionable. There is an unwritten law in base ball to the effect that the runner has the right to the base paths under almost all conditions, and the basemen have been encroaching a little further than they should.

The third baseman should remember that the runner whom he puts out must be touched as a rule. There are some force plays at third base, but they are few. The third baseman must learn to touch a runner from any angle at which he may receive a throw. The ball will come to him high and low and to one side. He must practise touching the runner from his heel to his shoulders. He may have to touch one on the head now and then, but those instances will be few.

In running players down between third and home plate the third baseman should try to keep the ball between the runner and the plate. It is not a bad policy to chase the runner a step or two toward home plate, but to run him to within a few feet of home and then throw the ball is very bad policy. The runner is likely to bump the catcher and the ball will be lost on the ground,

while the run will score. The ball between the runner and home plate is a menace to the runner. Between the runner and third base it will encourage the runner to go toward home and not toward third, which



A—Catcher. B—Pitcher. C—Runner. D—Third baseman. E—Ball either in catcher's or pitcher's hands between runner and home plate. F—Shortstop backing up third baseman. X-Y—Base line.

is the very thing that all of the players of the third baseman's side do not wish to see happen.

#### Never pursue the base-runner toward home.

The third baseman should always avoid trying to touch the runner out unless the latter is coming toward the baseman. Do not chase the runner at any time and attempt to tag him except when following a runner back to second base, and even then do not hold the ball after the moment that it becomes evident the runner cannot be touched. Before throwing get the runner back toward second as closely as is reasonable, and then throw. Back up immediately to get a return throw, if necessary, and if a fielder has dropped in behind and taken your place, drop out of the run-up and get behind the fielder who is backing up the third baseman.

When runners are rounding third base it is perfectly legitimate to stand on the inside corner of the base and compel them to take the outside, but no third baseman should attempt interference with a runner. Third base is next to the home plate and if a runner is advanced a base for interference, and the advancement begins at third base, it always means a run for the opposing team.

## General Play at Third Base

While practise is always advisable for young players to help them to attain accuracy in throwing, a suggestion is made that there be not too much of it. There is nothing which is worse for the young ball player than to throw until the arm is tired. There are some advocates of throwing who insist that the ball be thrown, and thrown, until the thrower has found it possible to hit a mark at which he aims nine times out of ten.

That sounds good and if a fellow could throw that way he might become a kingpin at any position on the field. Practise will help to make a thrower more accurate. If it were not for practise the pitchers would not excel as they do, but practise also is trying on the arm when there is too much of it for long distances. Players have come into the major leagues who were arm tired and some of them were worse than arm tired, and all for the reason that they threw the ball constantly at full force toward some mark under the mistaken belief that they were bettering their game for the future in which they were ambitious to be able to play base ball for one of the famous clubs.

Every boy and beginner should practise throwing and so should the professional, but it can be overdone. When the arm feels tired, stop throwing for the day, and if the arm feels tired on the next day stop at once. The throw from third base to first base is a long throw. Many make it with difficulty. If they try to make it too often, or too steadily, the time will come when they will

be unable to make it. It has been very truly said that there are only so many throws in the arm and that it is bad policy to endeavor to use all of them up in the first year or two of base ball.

### **Coolness a good quality in throwing.**

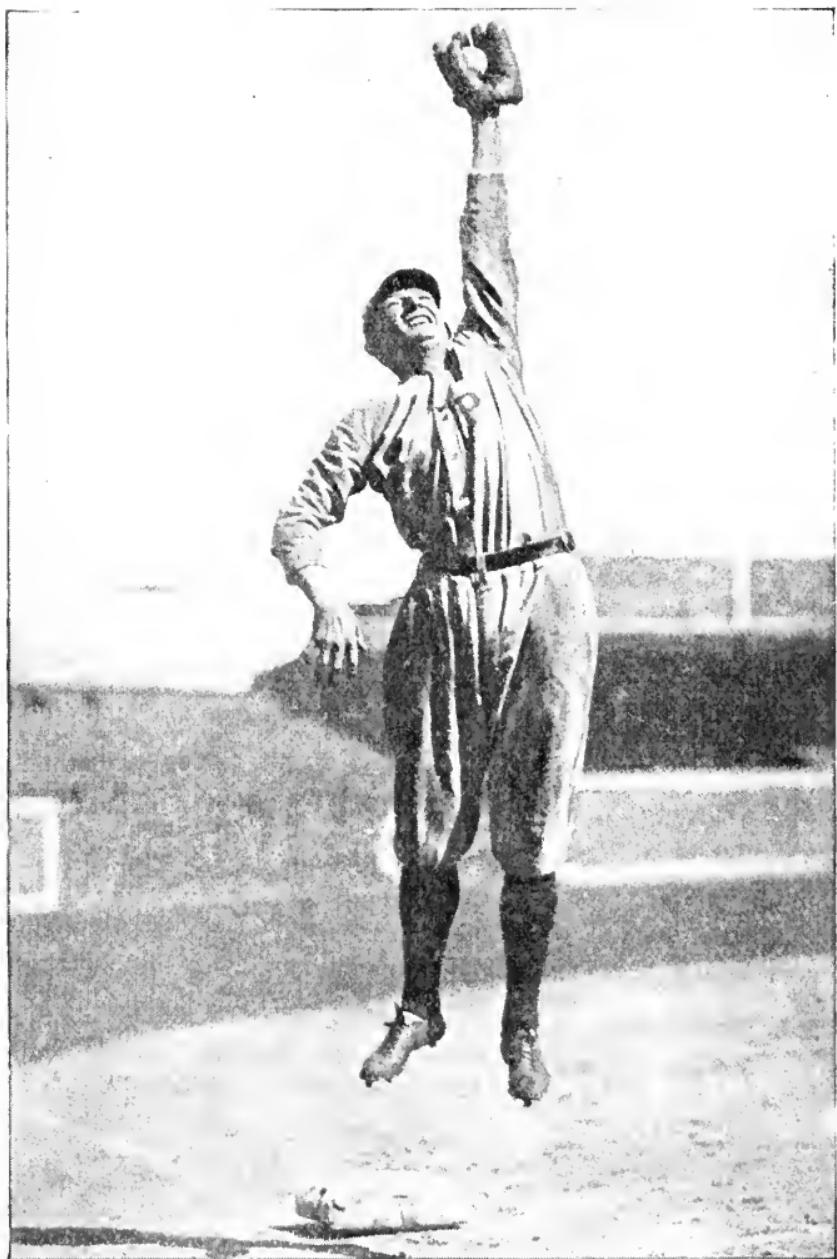
It has also been said that the practise of throwing a great deal will assist in accuracy. That is partially true. Some of the most accurate throwers make the poorest throws when they are called upon to act quickly. Keep cool if you wish to throw accurately. The excitable player may hit the bullseye in practise, but the roof in actual play. There have been some wonderfully good throwers in base ball playing at third base who could center the ball on almost any mark when they were among their fellow players before the beginning of the game, but who would finish the season with more wild throws than other third basemen in their league. The opposite of this is in the fact that there have been some third basemen who could barely get the ball across the diamond who hung to their positions for a long time because they were good infielders, were quick, and were accurate with what force they had to throw. They were of more value to their team than the strong, showy throwers who did all their throwing while a game was not being played.

It is right for the third baseman to have a sign with the catcher as to when the ball may be thrown to third base with a runner on the base. However, it is not good policy to try to give the third baseman more signals than he can remember. Sometimes the signs are over-

done. Once there was a manager of a team in the West who had a system of signs for every player on his team. Before the season was over his team "went to signs" and went to seed at the same time. He devised more signs than the team scored runs in two-thirds of the year. He gave signs from the bench, the pitcher gave signs to the fielders, the catcher gave signs to all of the basemen, the basemen gave signs to each other, and the code of signs made a book of its own, to say nothing of the playing rules and a few other things. This manager never won a championship because he worked the sign business to death.

#### **Sometimes "signs" are overdone.**

For one the writer believes that signs are a little overplayed except among the professionals. It is their business for the time being to use signs if they are with a team which finds it worth while to employ that kind of base ball. Remember one thing. The excuse that a player did not take a sign is one of the most frequent excuses that a losing manager has. Even when some managers have conducted championship teams they have been only too willing to place the fault of losing games on the alleged failure of a player to "take a sign" and when that is an excuse for defeat it makes base ball less a physical pleasure and more a mental task. That is not why base ball is played. Mental exercise can be had from the game, but physical benefit and pleasure should be derived from it as well.



Playing successfully for a hot line drive with one hand. Notice that the ball is played for with the gloved hand and that the player is not afraid to extend himself to his full limit to get the ball. (McKechnie, Pittsburgh.)

## Equipment for Infielders

Uniforms should be a part of the equipment for the game and almost all boys have them. There are two other essentials, however, which every infielder should have. One of them is a good glove. The other is a good pair of shoes.

### **Nothing better than shoes that fit well.**

The shoes are a little more expensive than the gloves but they are "worth saving up for." When the writer was a boy it was not uncommon for some of the ball players to play barefooted. Not infrequently their toes got "right smart hits," but that did not keep the boys from playing base ball. No sir. The game was too good. The splendidly fitting shoes which are made now were unknown. The first base ball shoes were of canvas and were queer looking footgear compared with the shoes which have since been patterned. Yet those old fashioned canvas shoes were better than ordinary shoes in which to play base ball. On the cover of the Spalding Base Ball Guide may be seen A. G. Spalding as a ball player in 1876 wearing a pair of canvas shoes.

Spalding shoes fit the feet splendidly. They are made exactly right for the purpose of running. The plates are properly placed and they are modeled to take hold of the ground so that they will be of benefit to the player. Spalding shoes are not heavy nor do they overheat and tire the feet, as was the case of some of the old-time shoes which have long since been improved upon.

Get a glove that is well shaped to the lines of the hand, one where the padding rests easily in the depressions of the palm. Remember that too much padding, where the hand is thick, is not needed. Another point to be remembered is that the quicker the glove can be made pliable and soft the better it will be for catching hot liners and long flies.

When a ball player loses a good glove he is disconsolate. The loss of his traveling bag doesn't mean much to him unless the glove happened to be in the bag. A glove is of such assistance, such value to him, particularly after it has become shaped to his hand that temporarily it seems to some of the older professionals as if they had lost the use of one hand. They take on about it at a great rate, and lose no time to get as quickly as possible to a Spalding store to find another. If there was no Spalding store near some little town, for instance, away down in the Southwest where the big league clubs often train, when the writer was secretary of the Giants, he was more than once implored to "Please wire Spalding's at Dallas or New Orleans right away; I got to have a new glove."

### **Easy and a help for the hand.**

The glove will save the hand many a time and it will make base ball more a pleasure and more reliable because there is nothing which the fielder will not try with his gloved hand. The first baseman catches high fouls in his big mitt with vastly more confidence and the third baseman could not do so well without his glove to stop the hot ones that come his way.

# THE OUTFIELD



Showing the V-shaped cup which is made by the hands to catch correctly a fly ball. The fielder has the ball safely, although it is almost concealed by the glove which he wears. Note long visor on his cap. (George Burns, Giants.)

Photo by International Film Service.

## THE OUTFIELDERS

There are three outfielders. One is called the Left Fielder; a second, the Center Fielder, and the third is called the Right Fielder. They have different duties to perform in a ball game, which will be explained later, but so far as their actual ball playing is concerned the feats which are demanded from their physical skill are much alike.

Every outfielder must be a good judge of fly balls and should be able to catch them in all positions and on either side of his body. If he is expert enough to catch flies with one hand while running at top speed so much the better. He should not try one-hand catches when he can use both hands. That makes an easy chance difficult and for the sake of appearing dashing he would be likely to put the chances of his team in trouble.

He must be able to catch line drives, sailing fly hits that go over his right shoulder or his left shoulder, and high arching flies which are difficult to gauge because of their altitude. He must be able to catch the ball "off his shoetops," as the saying goes. That means hard drives which fly low and to which the runner can just attain when he is compelled to stoop for the ball.

He must be able to catch fly hits that are turned by the wind. The ball does not always sail straight out from the batsman. He must be able to catch the ball on the run with the same ease of confidence as which he might catch it if he were standing still. He must be able to get the fly hit that seems as if it will go over

his head with the confidence that he plays for the fly hit which falls in front of him.

The boy or beginner can play the outfield without doing all of those things but he will not be likely to get into the big leagues unless he can do so. The task of playing the outfield is more exacting now than it ever has been and the fielding quality of the outfield game is superior to what it was in the past. Either boy or beginner who wishes to play the outfield, and who aspires to be a member of a major league team can acquire almost all of the needs of superior outfield work by practise. His practise work must be faithful and continuous. It is not necessary that he practise until he becomes stale, but it is necessary that he practise whenever an opportunity offers. There are beginners who are natural outfielders. There are some beginners who quickly develop into good outfielders and some who electrify their friends from the very beginning of their play by the admirable manner in which they handle themselves in the outfield.

### **Outfielders must have good throwing arms.**

The second essential for the outfielder is a throwing arm of the very best quality. There are, and there have been, outfielders who could not throw better than ordinary. To throw the ball home with accuracy was an impossibility for them. They had to find assistance. One of the other players must run toward the outfield and relay the ball for them.

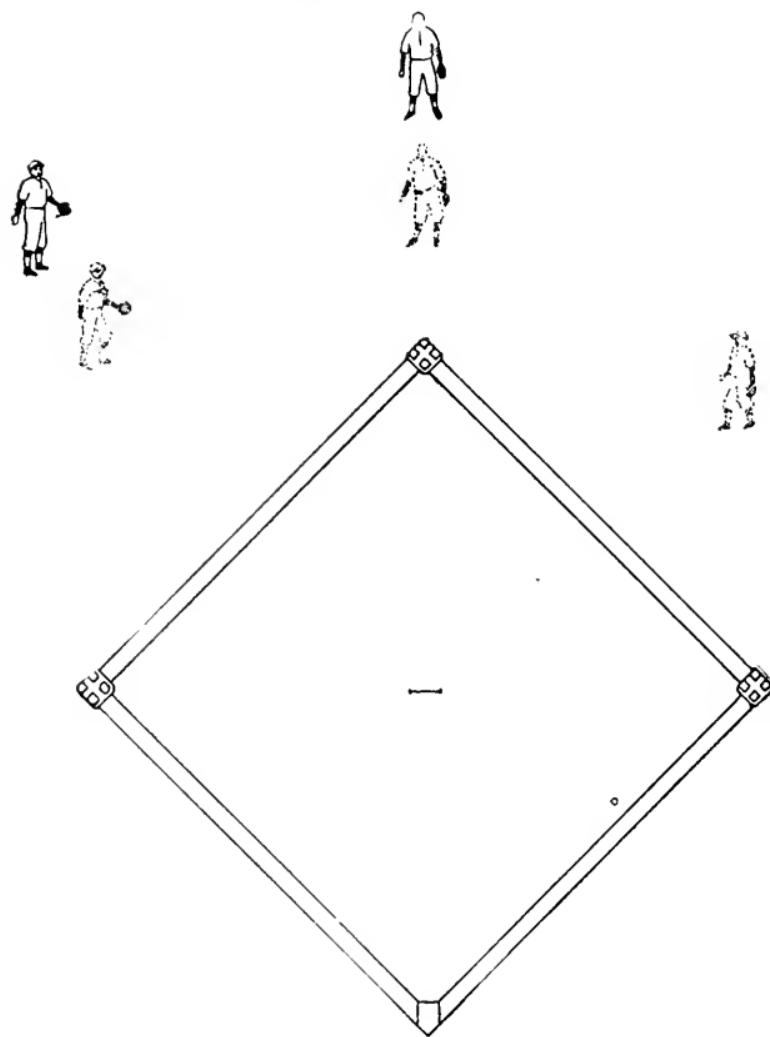
In certain plays a relay throw has its advantages. On the other hand when it is known that an outfielder cannot get the ball to the infield from the deep outfield without

being assisted every batter who makes a long hit will try for an extra base, because he figures his chances are good to beat the throw. A runner who is going at top speed, as runners usually are when they have made long hits, will have the advantage over the outfielder by many feet. If the latter is a weak thrower he will throw short when he tries to make his best long throw, and if he attempts to run in with the ball and then throw it he adds a base to the runner's life. A hit which would be good for two bases and one half, we will say, will surely be good for three bases, and if the batter be an exceptionally fast runner it may be good for a home run by a dashing slide to home plate.

#### **Batting occasionally redeems weak throwing.**

There are always some fielders carried by clubs in the major leagues who are comparatively weak throwers. The reason for retaining them is that they are good batters. If an outfielder is both a weak thrower and a medium batter he will not be successful long in higher grade base ball clubs. If a player is a very good fielder, a very good thrower, and a medium batter, the combination is such that it is often to the highest advantage to the team to have him for defensive play.

No player should undertake to play the outfield except that he has sharp eyesight. A fly ball cannot be judged unless the outfielder can see the ball perfectly from the time that it leaves the bat, or from the time that it breaks into sight after passing the shadow line of the stands. The latter statement may give a new idea to some who have not followed the playing of the outfield



Three rear figures indicate the usual positions of left, center and right fielders; the inner line of lighter figures indicates where outfielders would move, approximately, when playing to catch a runner at plate with one out and tie score threatened.

in recent years. On the grounds in the larger cities where there are huge stands it is not always possible to see the ball when it leaves the bat. The shade made by the stand obscures it. This is particularly true where the stands tower high and where the air is thick because of smoke or fog hanging over the park.

### **Ear helps to judge the fly balls.**

In conditions of this kind the outfielder who excels trains his ear to get an idea as to the flight of the ball. There have been many outfielders whose ears were valuable assistants to their eyes in telling them where the ball was to be expected. They played a fly hit by the crack of the bat against the ball and not wholly by straining their vision to see the ball at the exact moment at which it left the bat. Often, perhaps, a spectator has seen an outfielder dash for the ball when it would seem that it had been batted only that instant. He marvels at the superior eyesight of the outfielder. As a matter of fact, it was not vision alone which was better than that of the ordinary human but his hearing which gave him an idea as to where to expect the ball. There probably never has been any outfielder who could judge fly hits better than James R. McAleer, once center fielder for the Cleveland club. He gauged the ball by the sound as well as by sight and some of his catches in the outfield were astounding. Competent critics and judges have frequently held that he was superior to all outfielders as a fielder of fly balls. He was not a hard hitting ball player but he was worth his weight in gold to the Cleveland club because of the superb defense which he played

for the Cleveland pitchers. It has been said, repeatedly, and with great truth, that it was no wonder Cleveland pitchers made such fine reputations with a player like McAleer to catch the ball in the outfield.

### **Outfielders must be able to run rapidly.**

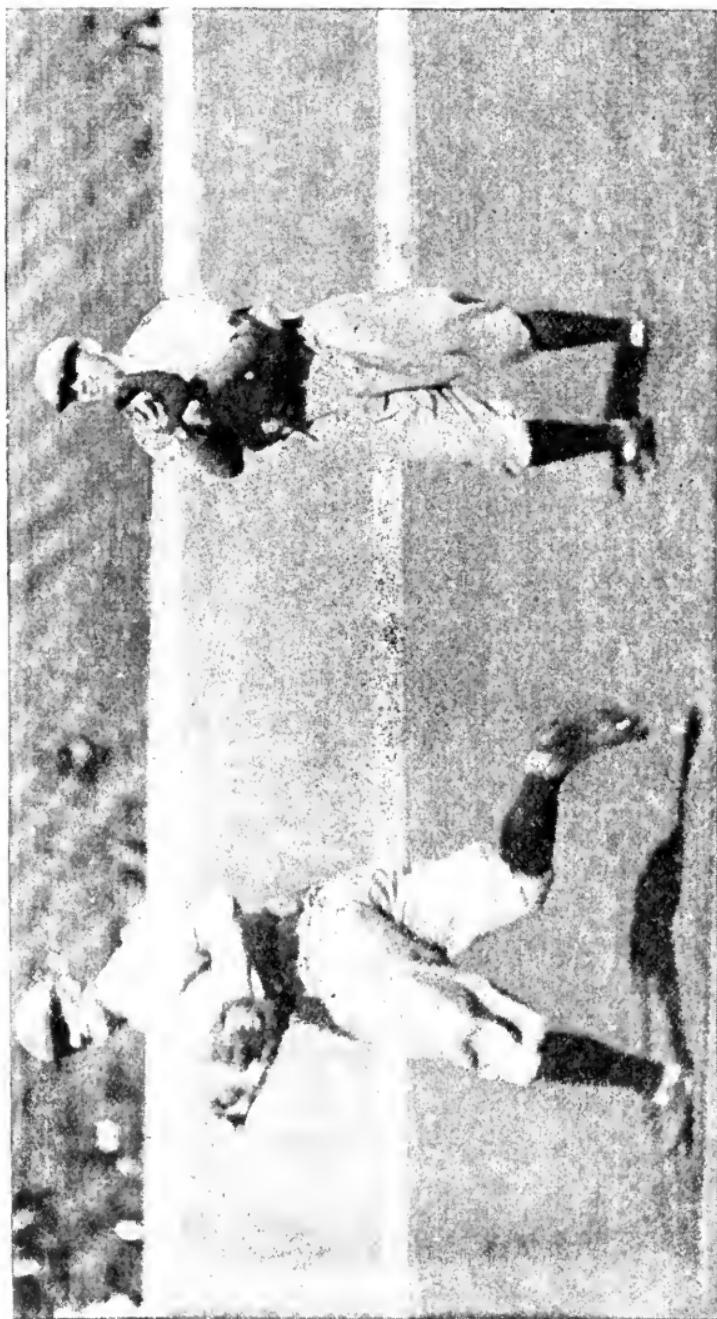
A fourth essential for the outfielder is ability to run rapidly. In old days many outfielders were slow, but they were retained on teams because of their fine batting. It would hardly do to say that some of these outfielders would not be acceptable now, especially to such teams as might be looking for batting ability, but no team would retain two of them, as has been the case in the past. A club could not afford to do it if it expected to win a pennant. The outfielder must be able to run fast, not only to get the long fly hits which come to him in the outfield but to hold his own in other departments of the game. Not so much attention was paid to the speed of a team in the earlier days of base ball as is paid to it now. Then it was the theory of the managers that runs were made most numerously and easiest by hitting the ball hard. Slugging ability was held to make up for lack of speed. The development of the game in recent years has been leaning strongly toward the side of speed and frequently good batters have been rejected and turned back to smaller leagues because they could not run fast enough to catch flies, or to score on possible chances. They blocked the members of their own team on the base paths.

The foregoing statements constitute physical needs for a player who essays to be a steady outfielder for his

school, or college, or for some team in professional base ball. The beginner may not have all of them. He may not develop all of them, even by steady and faithful practise, but he may develop some of them and he will surely be a better outfielder if he practises to develop all of them.

### Never hesitate to take practise.

Practise will aid in learning how to catch a fly ball. It will assist in throwing. It cannot do much to improve a natural defect of vision, but it will do a great deal to increase speed in running. The mere matter of practising a quick start in running will help an outfielder immensely. The foot or two which is gained by the quick start, as against the slow and hesitant start, may turn what seemed to be a certain three-bagger into a home run. On the other hand, many a long hit loses an extra base because of a slow start. Many a spectacular catch which is made in professional base ball games, and which the spectators insist has never been equaled, came about solely because the outfielder had learned how to start quickly. Slow starting will not help matters much when a liner is sailing at top speed toward the fences of a ball park.



Illustrates how to cross the fielder and not interfere with a fly ball when the other man has called out that he will make the catch. The man who called has caught the ball with his hands forming a V-shaped cup and facing out. (Carey, Pittsburgh, running; Bigbee catching ball.)

## The Positions on the Field

There is no set position for any outfielder. The left fielder is supposed to take care of the territory between an imaginary line which is drawn about six feet to the left of second base and extending to the fence, and the designated line of the left field foul boundary. The center fielder is supposed to take care of the territory between an imaginary line six feet to the left of second base and another imaginary line six feet to the right of second base, both lines extended to the fence in the out-field. The right fielder is supposed to take care of the territory between an imaginary line drawn six feet to the right of second base and the designated line of the right field foul boundary. In reality all of them play in each other's territory when occasion requires and they are presumed to have such a well understood arrangement among them that when one of them indicates that he will take a certain fly ball, others permit him to catch it and at the same time prepare to support him if he misses it.

No outfielder should say to another, "This is my place, keep out of it." On the contrary, all outfielders should help each other out, work in harmony and unison, and should be glad that any one of them has placed himself so well that he can catch a fly hit which, if missed, or if it fell safe, might change the outcome of the game. Let this fact be specially noted by younger players who seem to be of impression that they have an exclusive right to a certain plot of ground if they happen to be

playing in that particular plot. On the other hand, among the younger players there should be none who tries to get the ball when it is foolish to run too far into territory which he is not expected to cover except in emergency.

### Where the fielders station themselves.

When the game begins, if the batter is a pronounced left field hitter, the left fielder will play close to the left field foul line. The center fielder will station himself to the left of exact center and the right fielder will not play so closely to the foul line on his side of the field as he might have played if the conditions were reversed and the batter a pronounced right field hitter.

The important thing to know in the outfield is where the batter is accustomed to place the ball and play for him accordingly. When the batters are strangers to the outfielders the best thing to do is to play the field as the batter happens to stand at the plate. If he is a right-handed batter give left field the preference in defense. If a left-handed batter give right field the preference. By the time that the batting order has been played through once, the outfielders may have some idea as to where they would best station themselves to guard their positions well against the team which is in.

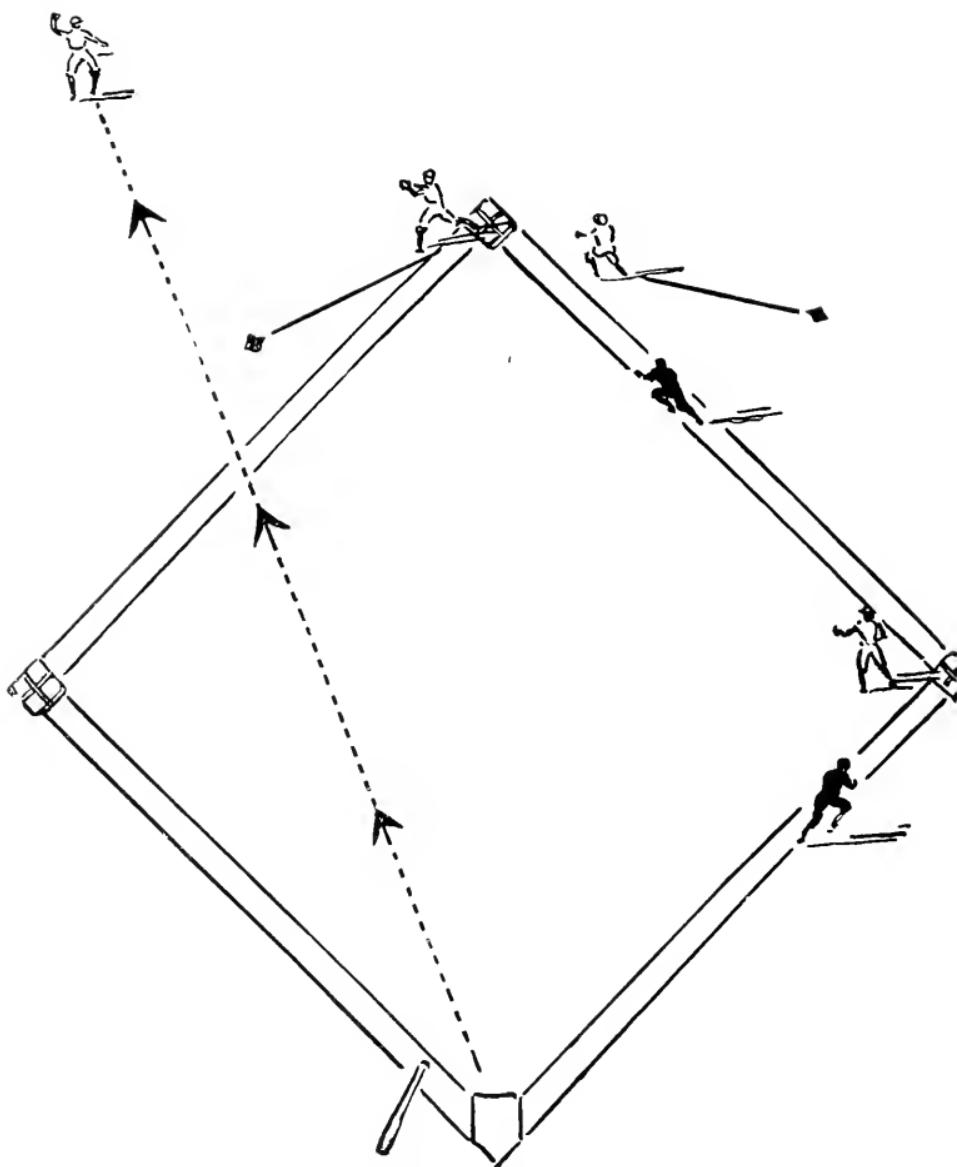
If a fly ball is batted to any one of the three fields the first and only thing which falls to the fielder is to get the ball, if he can. That is the beginning and the end of outfielding.

Suppose the ball goes to the outfielder on the bound. What then? That is a new test of the young player's

ability. He must show that he has some of the qualifications of the infielder as well as those of the outfielder. Some very awkward and difficult grounders go to the outfielders. It would seem that with all the distance which the ball has to roll to get to the outfield it should be well handled after it arrives there, but it is not always possible to handle it well. The ball may sneak. That is, it will roll closely to the ground instead of bounding up, and there is nothing which will fool an outfielder more and for which he will more likely be soundly criticized if he misses it, although it is one of the most difficult of all hits to handle. The ball may be rolling perfectly true and suddenly take a shoot which throws it high in the air. With a bound, the ball will go above the outfielder's head and he must turn disconsolately and chase it, while the crowd rages.

### **Hits that have fooled all outfielders.**

These are the exceptions, it is true, but they are all part of playing the outfield. Many and many a young player, and old one, too, has been fooled by such hits in the past. There is no sure way of playing against a hazard of the ball field of this character. The quicker that a player is in action the better chance he has to overcome such things, but quickness is the only thing which will save him. When it does happen he should be prepared to make an instant turn and go back, not so much to try to get the ball as to help his fellow outfielder who should have been backing him up. It is the latter's province to get the ball and the first outfielder's province to aid in relaying it to the infield.



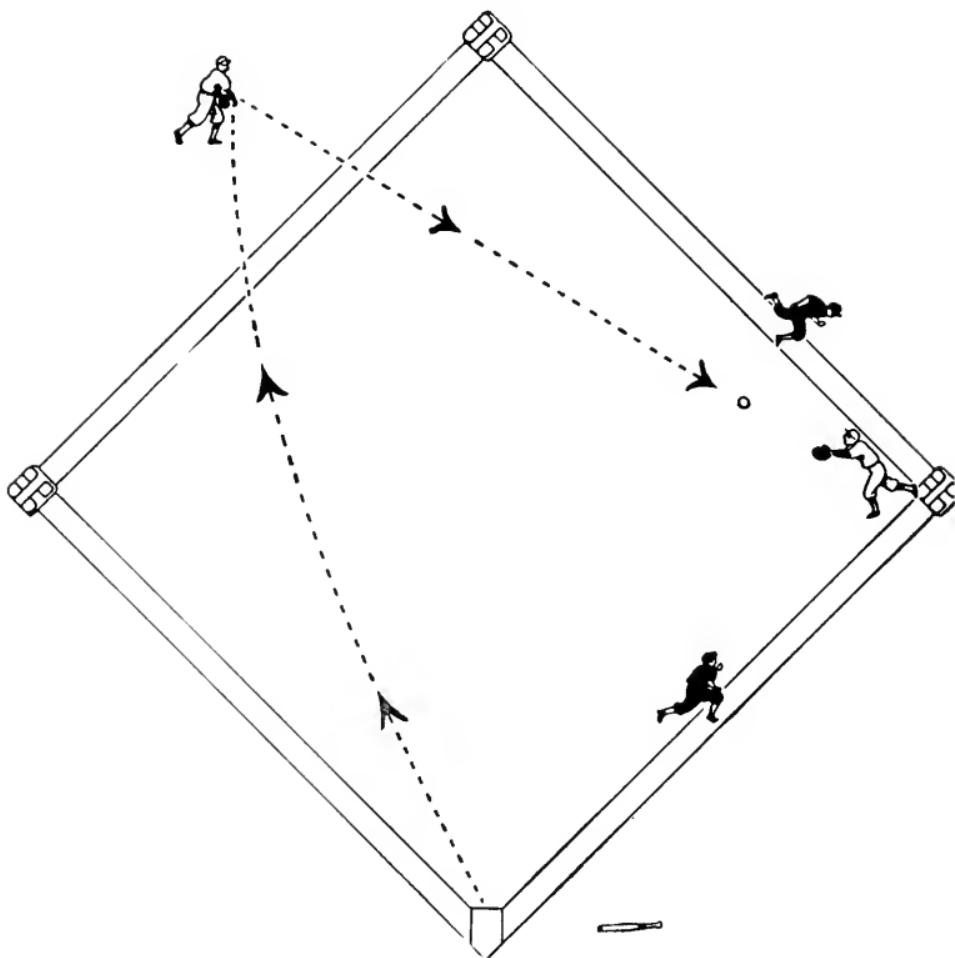
Safe hit to left field. Shortstop leaves fielding position to cover second base on throw-in from left fielder, while second baseman goes over to back up shortstop.

## Playing for the Ball

It is important in trying for fly catches in the outfield to hold the hands the right way. Some beginners start by attempting to catch flies with their hands crossed. The ball is attempted to be grasped by the left hand and the right hand is crossed at right angles to the left, like a backstop, and then hinged over upon the ball when the latter falls into the left hand.

That is the primitive way of catching fly hits and it is a bad method. Get away from it at once. There have been players who came from smaller organizations to clubs of the larger minor circuits and the major circuits who retained that method of attempting to catch flies. Not many of them lasted long. If they were unable to cure themselves of that style of ball playing their fate was sealed. Even good batting in these days is not always an offset to a method of outfielding which is dangerous to the success of a base ball team.

There are two ways to hold, or trap, a ball correctly when it is batted on the fly. One is to make a cup of both hands and hold the hands with the palms upward in front of the body, and the other is to make a cup of the hands and hold the hands with their backs turned toward the body. Both ways can be used at different times. Of the two the second is often preferred, as there is a natural give on the part of the arms toward the body which assists the player to hold the ball. It is not good policy to try to catch a ball and hold the hands rigidly. Always let them give a little in the direction in which the ball is making its flight.



Double play occurs when batter hits a "Texas Leaguer" or a fly that seems impossible to catch, and not an "infield fly," according to umpire's decision. There is nothing in the rules to prevent the shortstop letting the ball touch the ground first and then trying to get a double play to second to first, but he is taking a long chance. Black figure between first and second bases shows runner caught off base who had started for second base after deciding—erroneously, as it happened—that the shortstop would not be able to catch the fly hit.

The next thing to be learned in catching a fly ball is the necessity of keeping the eyes upon the ball. Expert fielders will run back at times with their backs to the ball because they have obtained what they believe to be a perfect idea of its line of flight. Beginners are to be encouraged in practising that method. No matter if every fly is misjudged for a week, keep at it. Do not be discouraged by the first failure or the first twenty failures. Perhaps it will never be as easy to some players as others, but if it can be learned by practise it will be one of the most valuable accomplishments that the aspiring young outfielder has acquired.

#### **Watching for the hits to one side.**

It is not only the fly hits which go over the head of the outfielder which should be watched and for which practise should be maintained constantly, but it is also the hits which go to one side of him and which do not quite reach him. All of these are best fielded by keeping the eyes on the ball. In the last thirty feet of the drop of a fly hit, if the fielder permits his attention to be deviated for a moment, he will be fortunate if he does not drop the ball.

The hands catch the ball, the eye judges it, and the feet carry the fielder to where the ball is presumed to be about to touch the ground.

It is apparent that the faster the runner the better outfielder he will be. This is so evident that it is only worth while to mention as a fine quality to have for perfect playing. The outfielder, in addition to being possessed of speed, should be able to start quickly. The

quick start is not always natural to players. It is acquired by some of them after practise and others seem to be unable to get into action with agility no matter how hard they try. That should discourage none from practising.

### **Better playing increases enjoyment in game.**

Note how often this word "practise" comes into use in writing about the essentials of good ball playing. Every game which is played will be played better by practise, and for that reason the younger players are urged, and urged again and again, to keep up their practise if they wish to improve. The game of base ball, like all other games, becomes more enjoyable the better that it is played. A splendid running catch in the outfield brings as much joy to the player who got the ball as it does to the spectators who attest their approval by cheering and clapping their hands. Even the oldtimers beam when they have done something that is unusually good.

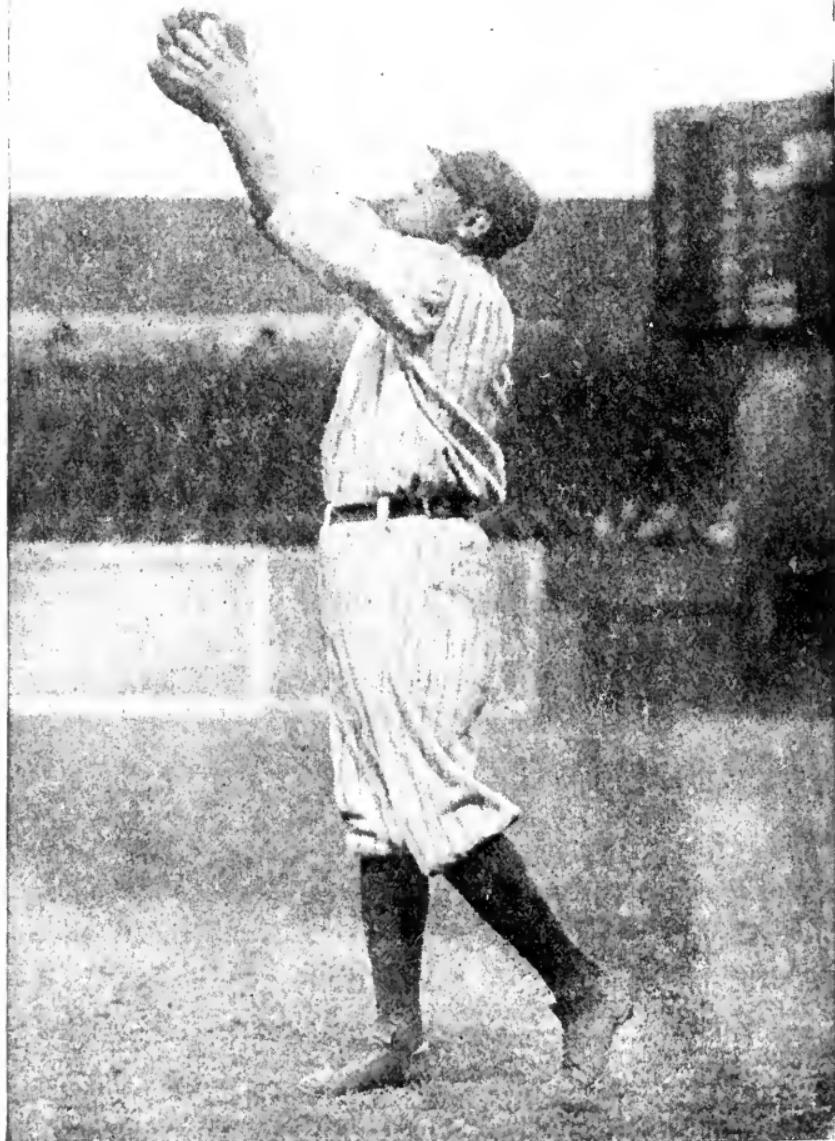
Practise for quicker starting is simply that which is followed by the sprinter who tries to get away quickly from his mark and not beat the report of the pistol. If the fielder does not always have some one to bat the ball to him he can draw a line on the earth and practise getting away from that on his toes. When in the outfield make a point in practise of always starting quickly, no matter where the ball seems likely to land. In time it will be as much a habit to be up and on one's toes as it will be to start for the ball. The quicker start will come into existence almost without realization of it.

Attention has already been paid to throwing, but while on this chapter of "Playing For the Ball" it is proper to note that the throw to the plate is better made on the bound than on the fly. There are comparatively few high-class long distance throwers. Nature could hardly be expected to deal otherwise with the human frame, as we know that not all of us are cast in the same physical mould. The catcher as a rule can do better work with the ball when it comes to him on the bound. For that matter, if the throw be to the pitcher who is to play for one runner, if another cannot be put out, it is best to throw on the bound. If a ball is thrown on the fly, and is poorly thrown, it is almost certain to permit the runner to make an extra base and perhaps two. On the other hand, a throw which bounces is handled better because the fielder, awaiting it, has some chance to shift his feet and, though he may not get the ball exactly in his hands, he will be able to block it and the runner will not gain so much in bases as he might otherwise.

#### **Line the ball on a relay throw.**

When relay throws are to be made it is not well to throw the ball on the bound. Do just the opposite thing. Throw the ball on a line. The throw will not be so long, at its best, and it is important that the player who is taking part in the relay receive the ball about chest high squarely in his hands so that he can turn quickly and throw home or to some base, as the situation demands.

Bear these facts well in mind. If a long throw, direct to the plate, send the ball in on the bound, but if a short throw for a relay, line it straight and true to the man who is the pivot in the relay play.



"Babe" Ruth out in his favorite spot in left field in the Polo Grounds, showing how he cups his hands when he is after the high ones.

Photo by International Film Service.

## Making the Proper Play

More games are lost because the outfielder does not keep the game well in mind and hold himself ready to make the right play than are lost by the outfielders making fielding errors. Remember that. For instance, if there is a runner on first base and he tries to go to third, with the chances all in his favor of making third base, do not throw the ball to third base, for if you do so the batter, who has become a runner, will make an extra base ninety-five times out of one hundred. Instead of having a runner on third base and one on first, which is a situation not so easy for the batting side to handle, there will be a runner on third base and another on second base, and the batting side will be in clover.

Many and many a game has been fooled away in major league championship races, and just as many in the college arena and in amateur sport, because the outfielder will make heedless and needless throws—injudicious throws which help to the defeat of his own team. Never throw the ball to a base if the odds are against that play resulting in an out. It is playing the game for the other team when you do that.

Never be afraid to return a base-hit to the fielder who is in the locality of second base. It has been stated that all base-hits should be returned to second base. That is misleading. What was meant by that statement was that the logical place to return a base-hit is somewhere in the vicinity of second base, when there is another play to be made, or when the batter is to be kept from advancing

no further than first base. It certainly would be poor policy to throw to first base to keep a batter on that base, because the longer throw would be just the thing which would permit the runner to get to the next base and, in addition to that, the ball would be played "behind the runner." There is nothing which gives a manager a meaner afternoon than to have his players throw the ball behind the runner. Keep it in front of him, so that he cannot advance against it.

#### **Never attempt useless throws to retire runners.**

Almost all of the throws to home plate are made after a fly ball has been caught and a runner on third base attempts to score following the catch. Do not throw the ball home if it is assured that the runner can score. If there are other runners on the bases they will advance at once. Throw the ball to the pitcher, if that play is customary with the team. He will stand in the center of the diamond and guard the various bases. If not the pitcher, throw to the infielder, who is running out ready to handle the ball the moment that you pass it to him.

It is foolish to try to throw a runner out who is scoring from third base on a clean hit. Yet it is tried. It is equally foolish to try to throw a runner out who has started from second on a clean base-hit if he is within twenty feet of the home plate when the ball is recovered. He cannot be caught, unless he falls down.

It is a fine play to throw a runner out from third after catching a fly, if there is but one hand out, or no one out. There need be no hesitancy in trying that play if there seems to be a chance to make it. Again, be sure

to throw the ball on the bound. The catcher can handle it very much better and the bound will glide into his hands perhaps at the very angle which is most desirable to touch out the runner. If thrown on a line it may be so low that the runner cannot be touched or so high that it will be the province of the catcher to save the ball from going over his head while the runner slides in to safety.

### **Be careful not to help "the enemy."**

Do not play for a runner from third base when it is very doubtful whether you can put him out and not a bit doubtful that a runner on second base will get to third on the throw. That is helping the enemy. Why make a play that gives the player of another team an added base? Throw the ball to the second baseman or to the short-stop, who will see that the runner at second is pinned there. He should be. If he gets to third base he will have a chance to score on a battery error or on some trivial mistake on which he could not have scored had he been held at second base.

One kind of hit to the outfield is always a source of embarrassment to the outfielder. It is that type of hit which is short and falls to the ground at a spot where the outfielder is in doubt whether to try for a catch or attempt to play the ball on the short bound. It is not an easy task to give advice on that play. Most outfielders try to "smother" the ball, which means to get it between the glove and the ground, which is about as good as anything that can be attempted. A safe way to play such hits is to give them a chance to bound. Play for the bound rather than the catch. If an outfielder is fast,

however, and can get to the ball where he can choke it down as it is about to bound, he will have gained distance and time for his team. If the ball gets away the probabilities are that it will go to the playing boundary of the field. It is a play in which the fielder must use his best judgment. To make an arbitrary assertion that one thing or another should always be done is too much.

Another play requiring judgment on the part of the right or the left outfielders is a long foul fly with a runner on third and only one out. Although the ball is a foul fly, the runner is permitted to start from the base the instant the ball touches the outfielder's hands. A good runner is often able to beat a throw to the catcher. More than one game has been lost by an outfielder—a right fielder especially—catching a long foul fly. If there is any doubt in the outfielder's mind it would be best not to attempt to catch the ball. A player on second will sometimes make a try for third base under similar circumstances.

### **Outfielders should always "back up" basemen.**

The proper play of the outfielder is also backing up the basemen. The right fielder should give assistance to the first baseman and to the second baseman. The center fielder should always back up the second baseman and also the shortstop when the latter is playing second base. The left fielder should be on the watch to go to the aid of the third baseman and sometimes he can help out the second baseman when the ball is thrown across the diamond.

The right fielder and the left fielder must go to the assistance of the center fielder. The center fielder must

go to the assistance of both the right fielder and the left fielder. Sometimes when two fielders come close together one of them will partially catch the ball. It will bound from his hands into those of another fielder. On that kind of a play the batter is out exactly as if the ball had been securely held by the first fielder who touched it.

The center fielder will have the greater area over which to range. It is essential that he help both the right and the left fielder and that he run forward to assist the second baseman. In addition to this, he has his share of fly hits to which he must give his attention. All of the outfielders should know the signs of the catcher, that they may govern themselves accordingly, although it is but fair to say that it is not easy to read the signs if they are concealed well. The old theory that there should be signs between the outfielder and the pitcher is no longer of much account. The game was made too intricate by using them. If the pitcher wishes the outfielder to change position he usually beckons to him to do so.

Signs are primarily a battery arrangement. Those who are interested in battery signs are referred to the chapter on the subject in the Spalding Athletic Library book, "How to Catch and How to Run Bases," also to remarks on the subject in "How to Manage, etc., " in the same series.



Outfielders should always start on their toes, as this outfielder has started. Starting flat-footed means the loss of at least one step and possibly two in trying to catch any kind of a fly ball to the outfield. (Carey, Pittsburgh.)

## The Field, the Wind and the Sun

The outfielder is not a weather prophet, as one might think from the title of this chapter, but the ground conditions and the atmospheric conditions concern him personally more than they do some of the other players on the team. Very often he does not have the fine, smooth surfaced turf which covers the infield. The wind can so change the flight of fly balls that they deviate a long way from a straight line before they are caught. The sun is an annoyance to any fielder, but to an outfielder, when the sun shines directly into his eyes, the annoyance becomes almost unbearable.

When playing on a strange ground, always note its depressions and elevations if it has any. Look out for dead furrows. Many a player has received a bad fall or a mean blow from the ball by running into a dead furrow the existence of which he did not know. A dead furrow is an open ditch, concealed by the grass, left at some time in the past when the field was plowed or perhaps run through the ground for purposes of drainage and which never was filled.

If the field is one which has been built for professional purposes, be sure that you have given the stand fences careful consideration as to their distance behind you when you are playing for the average long fly. It is also well to have the ball batted into the barrier a few times, if possible, in order that you may get an understanding as to how the ball rebounds when it strikes the wall. These bounds will depend greatly upon the angle at which

the ball hits the barrier. If the fence, for example, is exactly at right angles to the field the ball will be more likely to bound straight out. If it is not at right angles the ball will bound at a very moderate angle and perhaps roll down the field further than ever from home plate.

### **Ball takes peculiar bounds from fences.**

Playing the outfield takes a great deal of skilled work when there is a fence to be considered in every game which is played. Hence the suggestion that the fences should be studied carefully, exactly as the other points of a ball ground are studied.

If there is an elevation at some part of your field be sure to get its position well located in the mind and be ready for it. If running out for a fly ball there will be a tendency to stumble if the elevation is suddenly encountered without expectancy. On the other hand, be as sure there are no depressions with which you are not conversant, for when you run for a fly ball and keep your eyes on the ball, as you are supposed to keep them, you will have no eyes for holes in the ground and an unexpected step into one will probably throw you down, while the ball will escape you completely.

Take note of the direction of the wind. This is most important in spring and autumn. Usually most of the games in summer time are played on days when the air is very still. If the wind is blowing from home plate be prepared to run back on flies that on most days would not go over your head. It is astonishing to note the amount of carry that can be put on a fly hit when it is considered that the surface of the ball is so small. If there were

much expanse to the ball no one would be surprised to see it sail, but a base ball is not an over-large projectile to go through the air and many persons are quite astonished at the curve which the wind gives to the drive of the batsman.

### Wind will change the course of the ball.

If the wind blow from left field be prepared to veer over to the right to get fly hits that float. The moment the ball comes into contact with the counter wind it will begin to change its course toward right field. If it is batted straight out to center field, by the time it gets to the fielder it will be in right center. If the wind blows from the right field side, play more to the left field side. The ball will be carried in that direction by the passing gale. If the wind blows from back of you it will hold the ball in the air and make it easier for you to catch. Be sure, however, that you go far enough in for the ball. If you stop and hesitate, the wind will hold the hit so long that the ball will drop on the ground before you get to it. On any cross field wind, play the ball to one side. If you are fortunate enough to get it in front of you it will be caught that much easier, but there will be more possibility to get it on the side and for that reason it was suggested in a previous chapter that the player learn to catch fly balls on either side of his body, as well as directly in front of him.

The most experienced fielders are fooled now and then by the pranks which are played by the wind. Therefore try to learn all that can be learned about playing the ball correctly in a gale. The best way to learn is by practise,

and for that reason take advantage of a windy day to put in more practise than on a day which is calm. As a rule, there will be many more days of still air than days of smart blows.

### **Sunfield meanest position of all to play.**

The sunfield is the meanest position in which a ball player can be put. There is nothing harder and more irksome to play than the same field where day after day the sun stares one out of countenance. Many ball players have been compelled to retire before their normal time because they have played the sunfield all of their careers. Another hardship for the sun outfielders is that those who become proficient seem never able to get away from them, because any manager will stick to a good sun outfielder when he will be willing to part with one who cannot play any part of a game in the sun. There are some players who find it impossible to play in the sun, and there are others who make it appear impossible for them to do so. The proven sunfielders are the real martyrs of base ball, if there are any martyrs in the game.

Continuous playing of the sunfield will affect the ball player in time. It is a test of the strongest eyesight, not the eyesight that can see farthest, but the eyesight which can stand the brunt of an attack day after day from the brightest light which we behold in the universe. If it were necessary for one to work for two hours in the glare of an electric arc light, into which it would be part of the task to glance every now and then, and part of the time to face, it would give an idea of what it is to play the sunfield in base ball.

Many outfielders play what is known as a cross-field when the sun shines brightly. They take a place decidedly to one side where they are out of the path of the direct rays of the sun, and when the ball is batted they run across the field to the point where they think it will be ready to be caught.

Special sunglasses are made for professional ball players. Fred Clarke, former manager and fielder of the Pittsburgh Nationals, invented a sunglass that hinges on the cap and which can be turned up when not in use. It is sold by Spalding's and costs ten dollars. While expensive, they are splendidly adapted for their purpose and no doubt would save many an injury to the sight. However, a less expensive style of sun glass with good quality metal frames may be procured at Spalding's for as low as \$1.25. Some boys try colored glasses made of ordinary glass. There is risk attached to the use of those glasses and it is but fair that the young player should know it. In case of collision or fall, the frames of the glasses are not made strongly enough to keep them from breaking and splinters of glass may be thrown into the eye and affect the sight. This has happened, and it seems only fair to make it clear that it can happen, for no one wishes a young ball player, or any other, to have his eyesight injured by using a glass that is unsafe.

#### **Two caps good—one with long visor.**

Outfielders will find it to their advantage to have two caps for their games if they have to play a sunfield. One with a long visor can be worn while in the field and the other, with a much narrower visor, can be worn while

the team is at bat. For that matter, some outfielders wear the long-visored cap during all the game. Its shade does not bother them at bat and the wider visor is of such usefulness, playing daily in the direct glare of the summer sun, that they do not wish to be without it. Beginners who would like to use the long visor will find that it does not come amiss. George Burns, left fielder for the Giants, prefers the long visor and always uses it on the Polo Grounds, where the sun rages in the eyes of the left fielders the season around.

The sunfield can be played by shielding the eye with the gloved hand. It will not make a perfect screen, but it will make some screen. A little shade is better than nothing. The perfect screen is not always assured when the ball is being played with the best of sunglasses. The thing to do in the sunfield is to play it the very best that you know how and trust that there will be good fortune to follow your good intentions.

#### **Continuous playing in sun glare is bad.**

The professional player has all the better of the sunfield, because his special glasses will take him squarely into the fight for a sight of the ball and he will pick it out of the brightest of flashes that are coming from the big planet which feeds us with heat and light.

No player who makes an honest effort to get a fly hit in a sunfield and fails to do so ever should be chided by his fellow players or scolded by the spectators. The player frequently undertakes that which is an almost impossible chance and deserves praise, whether he is successful or is not.

## Playing for the Batter

Every batter's batting channel will not be learned in the first game that is played against another team. This is the case in the contests of the boys and the beginners. Furthermore, in the games of boys and beginners the batters have not attained their growth and they have not, as a rule, fallen into a fixed habit of batting to one field or another. The right-handed batter is very likely to bat into right field, because he swings slowly on the ball and does not handle his bat with the trained skill of a player who has been playing professional base ball for a long time.

It is not out of place, however, for outfielders in the boys' and beginners' teams to place themselves in the outfield as is indicated by the batters' positions at the plate. If the batter is right-handed, edge over a little toward left field. If he is left-handed, be sure that right field is well patroled.

In professional games placing the fielders for batters is another matter. There are certain batters among the professionals who fall into the very bad habit of hitting certain kinds of pitching almost to the same spot. Any fly batted upon which the ball drops time and again within a radius of twenty feet or thirty feet is a hit to the same spot, because any outfielder will be able to move over thirty feet in short order, if the ball is traveling at the customary speed of arching fly hits.

It is quite as bad a fault for the batter to place the ball all of the time as it is for the fielder not to remem-

ber that he does place the ball. It is the professional who must imperatively learn his batters and play them to the best of his professional skill. It is asking too much for boys and beginners to place outfield hits with assurance, but they can begin to try to place them. If they acquire the habit of placing such hits they will be better ball players when they are older. In this connection it is proper to call the attention of boys to the fact that they should not play too deep in the outfield in their games. Boys do not bat flies so far as adult professionals. In boys' games outfielders should be at least one-third closer to the infield than in the games of their older brothers and semi-professionals and professionals.

#### **Outfielder must be able to start right or left.**

The outfielder must be alert. That has been referred to. He must be able to start to his right or to his left. If that sounds as if it were advice which is a little unnecessary, it is not. There have been, and probably will be, plenty of players who do not start quickly either to the right or to the left. In one of the two ways they are faulty. Almost every ball player can start forward quickly enough, and not every ball player can start backward quickly. There is room for practise in all of these starts, and take the practise whenever the opportunity offers.

It is not necessary to plant one's shoe plates in the turf. In fact, do just the other thing. Rest easily on them. If the spikes have got a grip in the ground it will be a difficult task to make a quick start. It will be just your bad luck to have them hold when you are most anxious to get "away on the jump."

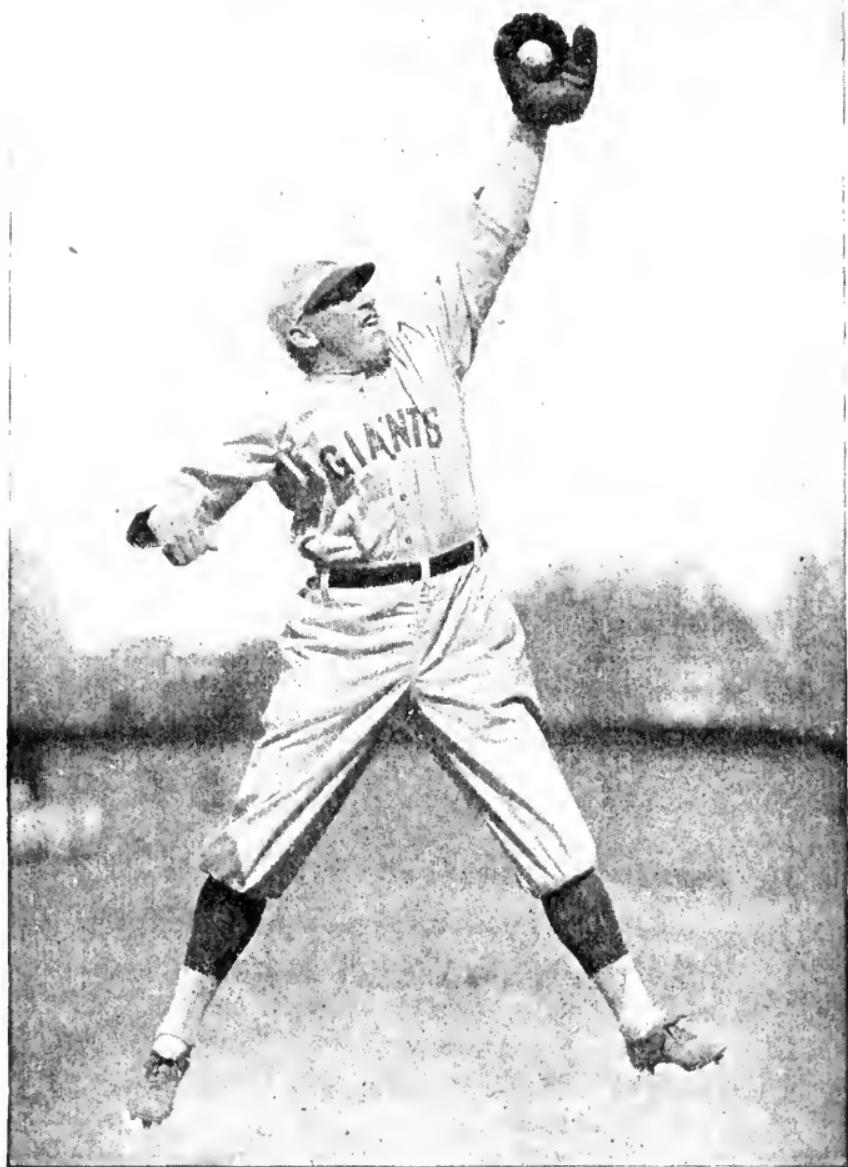
One thing more about playing for the batter, and a very important item. If you are running for a fly and the fielder next you is also running for the ball, let him know unmistakably that you are going to try to catch it. Do not wait until within a few feet of the ball before you cry out, "I have it." Begin to shout for the ball the moment that you are certain that you are going to take it.

### **Play so as to avoid collisions.**

Have a perfect understanding with the outfielder next to you that he will drop out if you notify him that you will take the catch. If you do not have such understanding a collision will be one of the unfortunate after effects. Collisions in the outfield are followed by bad hurts too frequently.

"I have it" should keep any ball player away from a fly hit except the man who has uttered the words. No fielder should shout, "I have it," after another has signified his intention to catch the ball. Someone asks, "Suppose both outfielders should say the same thing at once?" In that case the captain of the team should call at the top of his voice for one of the two players to take the ball. If not the captain, then the nearest infielder, but be sure that some one prevents a threatened collision between the outfielders.

It is customary for the player who says, "I have it," to gesture with both arms to the right and to the left to warn other fielders away from him, and it is a good plan.



Off the ground for a leaping one-hand catch. Snapped when the fielder tried for the ball and captured it, even though it was over his head. (Ross Youngs, Giants.)

Photo by International Film Service.

## Observe the Rules

The rules of base ball were made to be observed.

First know their contents thoroughly by reading them. Then observe them.

Do not question the umpire unless you have authority to do so. It is true that some advocate a "little argument" with the umpire in order that the spirit of the game may be maintained. A "little argument" almost invariably leads to trouble. Only one person has any authority to address the umpire. He is the captain of the team and he is never permitted to question an umpire's judgment. He may question that which seems to be a wrong interpretation of the rules.

Never lose your temper in a base ball game. There is nothing which is more pleasing to the other side. If you cannot control your brain you cannot control your bat, and you will probably strike out or muff the ball.

Never do anything to a ball player which might tend to injure him. Never do anything which you would consider to be a cowardly attack upon yourself. If you thought the other fellow a coward for doing that to you which you might do to another, what will you think of yourself?

There are times in a ball game when a player is at a disadvantage because he is sliding, or has slipped to the ground, or something of that sort. If you deliberately harm him at a disadvantage you have lost all the good which the ball game was supposed to do for you. A clean, hard, fair and square contest is base ball and good

sport, and anything which savors of muckerism is not sport.

If you nag the umpire you forfeit any consideration at his hands. He has the right to remove you from the game. Your loss from your own team may cost them victory. When the game is over defeat stings and is remembered, but the umpire is only an incident of the contest and is forgotten long before the memory of defeat has ceased to rankle.

Never wilfully attempt to spike another ball player. Remember that the spirit of American sportsmanship is above that.

Always remember that you are taking part in a game which is the national game of the United States, which is a democratic game, which is a healthful game and a sound game. American boys have a special mission to see that its standard is maintained.

## Keeping in Condition

Every ball player, from the boy to the man, should live a clean, wholesome life. The best physical results are obtained by faithful observance of everything which keeps the body in its best condition. Base ball is a splendid exercise of itself. Hence the ball player does not always find it necessary to go through any special system of exercises to keep his muscles pliable and ready to respond to the demands that are made upon them. There is no objection to taking exercises which are not too vigorous and which are health giving. They should not be overdone. Too much exercise in one way is wasteful if it is also too severe.

The professional ball player goes away to train when the springtime comes. He takes unusual exercise then to rid himself of the stiffness which results from the winter vacation and also to be free as quickly as possible from the soreness and aching which follows when muscles that have not been vigorously used for a time must be called back to fitness for daily ball playing. If you do not throw the ball for two or three months and then undertake to throw it, the next day there will be soreness in the shoulder and arm because the muscles have not been exerted freely for a long period previously. There is nothing harmful about such soreness. It is only the momentary complaint of the muscles after their term of idleness. However, in bringing them back to their highest stage of perfection, and to the point where they may be used freely every day without becoming

permanently sore, take care not to attempt too much at once. Enduring harm can always come from straining anything so delicately built as flesh tissue and tendons. Take it easy in the spring until the arm never feels the effect of a throw. When that happens physical condition, so far as the muscles are concerned, will be good again.

Boys and beginners may walk all they wish. There is no exercise which is better. It is mild and it is thorough. It is good for the legs and good for the wind. There is no harm in practising running, and when practising it remember that it is also good to practise starting quickly in conjunction with it. Line up on a mark and get one of the other boys to start you. When it is his turn to run let someone start him. Do not run long distances. Just sprint a little and then go back and try it over again. The more a quick start can be perfected the better it will be when ball playing begins. Many of the most brilliant plays in base ball are made as much because of a quick start as because of expert use of the hands. The point in fielding is to *get on top of the ball as quickly as possible*. This is well illustrated on the cover where Ty Cobb is shown starting for a line drive that is going to drop considerably in front of him.

#### **A full stomach means a slothful brain.**

Never overeat. Stuffing the stomach with food because it tastes good, and after the natural appetite has been satisfied, is the worst thing that an athlete can do, and a ball player is an athlete in the full sense of the

word when it comes to eating. It is very bad policy to eat heartily and then try to play base ball. That applies to boys as much as it does to grown people. The stomach does not like to work when the legs and the arms are going at their best. All three of them in operation at once are a tax on the heart and the stomach will be the greatest sufferer.

Natural ability is the first requisite of a ball player. He has no control over that. He is born with it. Improvement follows by practise. All through this volume that fact has been impressed wherever it seemed to be timely. Condition is just as essential as practise. Keep the condition of muscles and tendons as perfect as possible by working them out faithfully and gradually.

#### **Bad hours no aid to good athletics.**

It is a mistake to keep late hours at night and later hours the next morning. Many players do that. Such a course will bring about inactivity. If a player does not arise until well in the forenoon he barely is invigorated before the game is to take place in the afternoon. If he follows his late rising with a heavy meal he will be slothful for practise in the afternoon, and if he undertakes to play without a good hustle on the field he will not play at his best. If that policy is continued, the player will drop down in the fight for base ball supremacy. Someone will rise up and take his place.

Tobacco and stimulants are quite unnecessary. The latter are bad for any athlete. Cigarette smoking will surely harm the wind if cigarette smoke is inhaled. Too many good ball players have dropped out in recent years because they were confirmed smokers.

Diet is a matter of personal taste. Base ball is a steady performance of about six months for the professional. To continue all of that period on a strict training diet without much variety would be as injurious as to indulge all of the time in those things which are not healthful. Fresh vegetables, well cooked, are always good, because base ball is a summer game. Too much meat is bad. It clogs the system, even with the exercise which is taken by a ball player. Steaks or chops two or three times a day are not good for athletes.

#### Heavy mid-day meal a costly luxury.

Avoid the heavy midday meal. It tasks the system too severely. Try a little appetizing soup, ice cream if the taste is inclined that way, no pastry, although puddings are harmless if well made, and some fruit is good if it is perfectly ripe. Stewed fruit is beneficial. If the player desires a hearty morning breakfast that is the more reason why he should retire early and arise early.

To the boys and beginners who play ball once a week or so there is as much necessity of clean living. In the long run it will be found to pay with compound interest. The boy who goes through a ball game and comes out of it with a "fine, healthy tired" has profited by the game. The boy who drags through the game and who fails to arouse an appetite for healthy food after he has played is not giving his stomach a fair show. You can't play base ball well and treat the stomach and the remainder of the body unkindly.

## Ground Rules

It is very important to agree upon ground rules before a game begins, especially when it is played on an open space like a park playground, for instance, where there is no fence or barrier. So many spectators go to baseball games in automobiles nowadays that many motor cars are often parked behind the bases, and it should be distinctly understood how many bases are to be taken if the ball goes beyond the coaching line into the crowd or into or among the automobiles.

If the captains cannot agree upon ground rules, the umpire must make them. It is advisable for beginners in base ball, and for those who play upon grounds which are not enclosed, to have a fixed understanding as to the number of bases to be taken in case of an overthrow to first base or to third base.

The rules say that in awarding bases under certain conditions the umpire shall be governed by the position of the runner, or runners, at the time the throw is made. In the games of beginners much controversy will be avoided if the captains of the teams state that an overthrow is to be followed by two bases or one base, as may be determined, the position of the runner being taken as that base which he held, or had just left, when the misplay was made.

If a runner is on first base when a wild throw is made either to the first baseman or the third baseman, he should be given one base or two bases, as agreed upon, irrespective of whether he has started for second base,

or whether when the throw was made he was a step or two over second base, because he had started to steal that base with the pitch. This advice is offered as a suggestion to do away with argument and disagreement which follow almost inevitably when a dispute arises as to where a runner may have been.

Players, captains and managers should read the "Knotty Problems" published each year in the Spalding Official Base Ball Guide, and also in the book of the Spalding Athletic Library series called "Knotty Problems." Many contentions would be avoided and much useful base ball information would be gained. It is the kind of information which is valuable both on the field and off.

## Books to Read

As in every line of endeavor, whether in play or otherwise, information on any subject is now obtainable through books of instruction which will greatly help the seeker after knowledge.

While this volume is devoted especially to the positions of the infield and the outfield, nevertheless it is important to know what the duties of the other positions demand.

As every player has to take his turn at bat, the Spalding Athletic Library, "How to Bat," will be found most useful. Every detail of the subject is clearly presented, with instructions for holding the bat and directions for play under varying circumstances. The price is 25 cents.

Base-running is likewise a necessary accomplishment of every player. One may not be the swiftest runner but nevertheless be a successful base-runner by use of strategy and common sense. Heretofore base-running was treated of separately in the Spalding Athletic Library series, but Mr. John B. Foster's experience in answering hundreds of "knotty problems" in connection with his duties as editor of the Spalding Guide emphasized the fact that the art of base-running was more closely related to the catcher's position than to that of any other on the defensive side of the game. To have a clear understanding of what to do under certain circumstances it is necessary to anticipate what the catcher purposes to do under similar conditions. For that reason one book now combines both subjects, in separate sections, but nevertheless so closely related that its utility will be at once apparent.

Mr. Foster, who compiled "How to Catch and Base-Running," was for years a New York sporting editor and traveled thousands of miles in that capacity with National and American League teams. He was for seven years secretary of the New York Giants, in daily contact with those master minds of base ball, John J. McGraw and Christy Mathewson, besides other players who have visited the Polo Grounds as players, and thus has had exceptional opportunities for acquiring at first hand all of the "inside" base ball that only daily intimate relations would afford. That is why all of the Spalding books on base ball are so popular, because they present the best information that can be obtained. Price of "How to Catch and Run Bases," 25 cents.

Although every boy does not become the pitcher of his nine, nevertheless it is safe to say that every boy wishes to know how to curve a ball. A. G. Spalding's reputation as a ball player was made as a pitcher when but a lad of seventeen he pitched his team—the Forest City club of Rockford, Illinois—to victory over the famous Nationals of Washington in 1867. This was the beginning of a career as a pitcher which later brought him to the championship teams of Boston and Chicago as a player and subsequently president of the Chicago base ball club and one of the founders of the National League. In "How to Pitch" is shown in a clear manner how to hold the fingers to produce the desired curves, in addition to which much general advice is given on the duties of the position. Price 25 cents.

Other interesting books in the base ball group are "Base Ball for Beginners," by John B. Sheridan, origina-

tor of the boys' size diamond, price 10 cents; "How to Play Base Ball," 10 cents, and "How to Manage, Coach and Captain a Team, How to Organize a League, and Technical Terms," 25 cents.

Thousands of readers of the Spalding Guide read the "knotty problems," which are actual questions asked annually during the course of a season and answered by mail. Some are selected for publication in the Guide, and later these and other important ones are printed in book form. "Knotty Problems" is undoubtedly of great help in solving many questions that arise in interpreting the intent of the rules. Price 25 cents.



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with the latest ideas in equipment for his favorite game should send for a Spalding catalogue of the sport in which he may be most interested.

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